



# THE RENGMA NAGAS



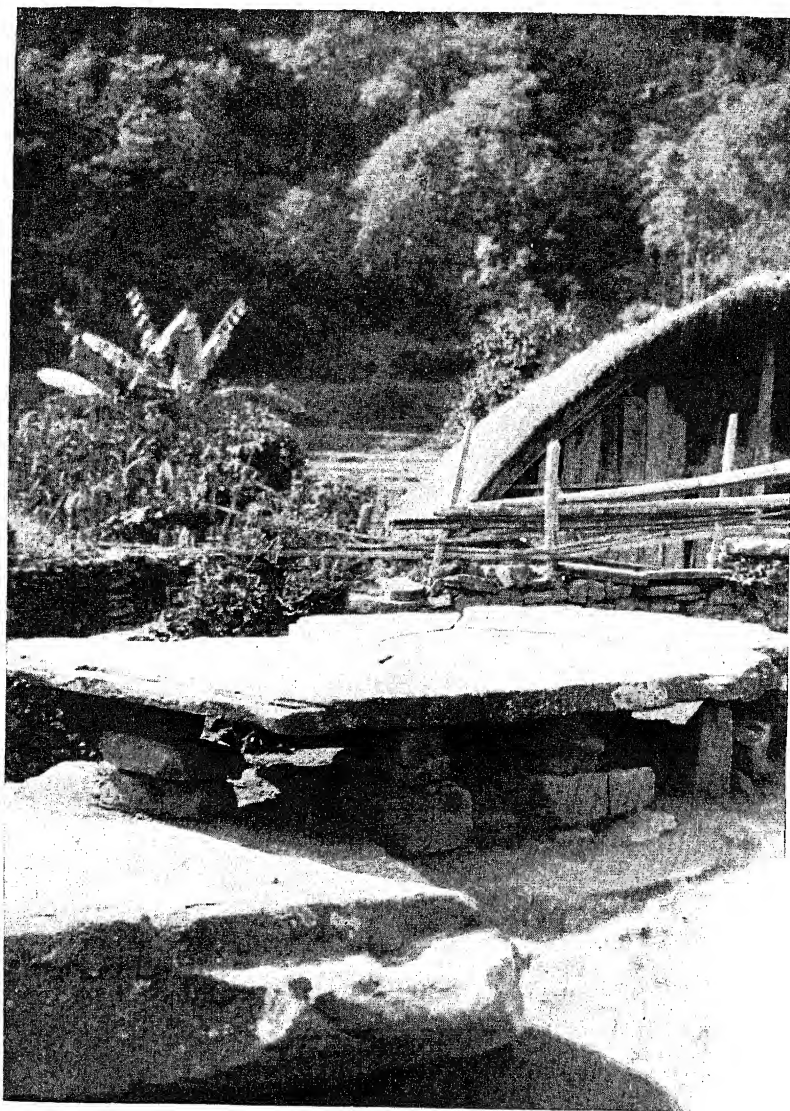


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THE SACRED STONE AT KHEZHA-KENOMA, WHENCE THE ANGAMIS, SEMAS,  
LHOTAS AND RENGMAS MIGRATED

[Frontispiece.]

# THE RENGMA NAGAS

BY

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INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE

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## PREFACE

THE great difficulty of describing adequately and simultaneously three widely divergent sections of the same tribe must be my excuse for some at least of the deficiencies of this book. It seems certain, humanly speaking, that it is the last tribal monograph I shall ever write, and my thanks are due to all those who made its production possible. The Government of Assam have again provided the funds. All praise is due to those who so regularly and generously pour out money in aid of the physical sciences. But there is no denying that our knowledge of the inorganic world has so far outstripped that of the organic that there is real danger that physical science may become an instrument too powerful for our control. The study of cultures and of their impact upon one another is all important if human progress is not to be left unguided in a shrunken world where the protection of distance has been well nigh destroyed by rapid means of communication. The greater credit is therefore due to a Government which, looking beyond the immediate present, is ready to stand forth as a patron of anthropology even in times of great financial stringency.

Equally essential has been the help given me by my Rengma friends. Conspicuous among those who have spent patient hours answering questions are Resillo and Khonkhe of Tseminyu, Yanthangsao of Tesophenyu, Putho and Nisetsû of Meluri, and Siyeto of Lephori. Death has taken three of them since the MS was completed. At least they never lived to see their cherished culture and beliefs swept away and destroyed.

Dr Christoph von Furer-Hamendorf of Vienna University was with me when the proofs came in. My thanks are due

to him for reading them through and for assisting me with his valuable criticisms

My deep gratitude is also due to Colonel J Shakespear, who has been kind enough to undertake the tedious task of compiling the index, thereby relieving me of work which would have been spread over weeks of a busy official life.

J. P. MILLS.

*Kohima,*  
*June 20, 1936*

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## PART I

### INTRODUCTORY

(*Note* —The letters A, B, and C after Rengma words denote respectively the languages of the Southern section of the Western Rengmas, the Northern section of the Western Rengmas, and the Eastern Rengmas )

THOUGH one of the smallest of the Naga tribes, numbering only 6,329 <sup>1</sup> souls at the Census of 1931, the Rengma Nagas have an undoubted claim to be included in the series of ethnological monographs published by the Government of Assam. Firstly, Mission influence is spreading among the Western section of the tribe, and it will not be long before customs and traditions of great interest are gone for ever. Secondly, when a monograph on this tribe is included, the series will entirely cover a large block of contiguous tribes, the Angamis, Semas and Lhotas who are neighbours of the Rengmas having been already described. Thirdly, the divisions of the tribe give rise to questions of peculiar interest. The Eastern Rengmas have been cut off from all communication with their parent stock for many generations, and provide specially valuable material for the study of the extent to which isolation causes changes of custom and language <sup>2</sup>. Fourthly, in the Eastern Rengmas it is possible to study a body of unspoilt primitive people who have only been administered for fourteen years and have forgotten nothing of the old fighting days.

For the main body of the tribe I have used the term Western Rengma. They inhabit the spurs of the long ridge

<sup>1</sup> This figure is certainly wrong. There are Rengma villages in the Mikir Hills, but the Census shows no Rengmas in that area at all. How they were enumerated it is impossible to say.

<sup>2</sup> The Northern and Southern Sangtams are similarly cut off from all communication with each other by a wedge of invading Semas. Valuable material will also be found when this tribe comes to be described.

running north-east from Nidzukur Hill, through Therugu Hill to Wokha Hill, and are bounded on the south by Angamis, on the east by Semas and on the north and west by Lhotas. About a hundred years ago or more a body of Western Rengmas migrated north-west to the Mikir Hills, where they are still living<sup>1</sup>. In 1848 the Mikir Hills Rengmas numbered 689 households scattered among thirty-two villages. Like all District Officers, I am virtually a prisoner in my district, and have been unable to visit the Mikir Hills, but I doubt if anything is to be learned from the Rengmas there that cannot be learned from the main body of the tribe. These migrants have abandoned many of their tribal customs. As long ago as 1855 Major John Butler said of them, "At the present day the Rengma Nagas appear to be degenerating. In physiognomy they differ but little from the Cacharee tribes, and many have married Cacharee and Assamese wives"<sup>2</sup>. This monograph therefore deals only with the Rengmas of the Naga Hills. The Western Rengmas are in turn divided into a Northern and a Southern section, speaking entirely different languages and differing considerably in custom. The Northern section, who call themselves *Ntenyu*, inhabit the villages of Kotsenyu, Kotsenishinyu, Kitagha and half Tesophenyu. The Southern section, who call themselves *Nzong*, inhabit the other half of Tesophenyu, Tseminyu, Phesinyu, Sentenyu, Choshinyu, Tsokonkonyu, Therugunyu, Thegwepegedenyu<sup>3</sup> and Nishinyu. It was from the Northern section that the Eastern Rengmas, who call themselves *Anyo*, split off. They have only three villages, Meluri, Sahunyu and Lephori, of which Meluri is by far the largest. All are near the Tizu, not far from its junction with the Tiho, one of the big

<sup>1</sup> The Mikir Hills Rengmas are known to the Northern section of the Western Rengmas as *Nzong ter phenyu* ("cane-path Rengmas"), and to the Southern section as *Ntenyu awr khaya* ("cane-cutting Rengmas"), because their path of migration led through the dense cane jungle bordering the plains. Dr. Hutton is mistaken (*Lhota Nagas*, p. xiv) in thinking that the bulk of the tribe migrated to the Mikir Hills.

<sup>2</sup> Major John Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, p. 124.

<sup>3</sup> The Government map shows this village as Thegwepekenyu. This is so far from the correct spelling that I have discarded it. For other villages I have used the official spelling for the sake of convenience, though it could often be improved upon. Phesinyu should, for instance, be Phensinyu, and Kotsenyu, Kontsenyu.

tributaries of the Chindwin. Though only twenty miles as the crow flies from the main body of the tribe, they are cut off from all contact with them by the powerful Sema and Angami tribes and the high range that forms the watershed between Assam and Burma. In the little piece of country in which they have established themselves after long wanderings they have Southern Sangtams as neighbours on the north and east, Tangkhuls on the south, and Eastern Angamis on the west

The first European to see Rengmas was Lieutenant Grange in 1839, when men from several villages met him at Mohung Dehooa in the plains,<sup>1</sup> and by 1848 Rengma villages in the Mikir Hills were paying revenue. The villages in the Naga Hills, however, remained unvisited and independent for many years. About 1870 Captain Butler paid a friendly visit to the Western Rengmas, and was well received. In 1874 Dr Brown carried out an extensive tour of exploration,<sup>2</sup> visiting not only the Western but also the Eastern Rengmas. He was opposed at Tesophenyu by the former, and the village lost heavily. This is the only occasion on which fighting has taken place between Rengmas and British troops, and even this brief encounter was due only to intrigue. The Angami villages of Khonoma and Mozema had recently raided Tseminyu at the instigation of Tesophenyu, and had been severely handled. They therefore tried to persuade Tseminyu to oppose Dr Brown, knowing they would lose men. Tseminyu, however, were warned by Chechama that they were being made fools of, and in turn instigated Tesophenyu to fight. They followed the British column and burnt their enemies' village with joy. Marching east, Dr Brown went right through to Meluri, where he was well received. From 1878, when Kohima and Wokha were occupied, the Western Rengmas were administered. The Eastern Rengmas were, however, long left to their own devices. From 1910 to 1912 there was a post at Meluri during the expedition against the Kalyo-Kengyu village of Makware, and again while punitive

<sup>1</sup> Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, p. 121

<sup>2</sup> Dr R. Brown, *Report of the Exploration of the Angami Naga Country*, 1874

measures were in progress against the Thado Kukis six years later. The area was finally annexed in 1922.

### *Origin and Migrations*

Both Lhotas and Rengmas agree that until comparatively recently they were one tribe, but the splitting, reuniting and resplitting of various sections of the Rengmas have made the details of their later migrations most intricate and difficult to disentangle. The main outlines of the story are, however, fairly clear. They, with the Angamis, Semas and Lhotas, belong to the group of tribes that place their point of dispersal at Khezha-Kenoma, which the Rengmas call Khinzonyu, due east of Mao, on the border of the Naga Hills District and Manipur State. Of their history before this dispersal no tradition survives. As with the other tribes, the cause of the dispersal is said to have been a dispute over the stone which had the miraculous power of increasing rice dried on it.<sup>1</sup> The two sons of the ancestress of the Khinzonyu clan quarrelled over the question of which had the right to use the stone. Their mother judged their quarrel, and wrongly gave the right to her younger son. Whereupon the elder son with his men left the village and set off towards the north. His example was followed by other discontented families, and the migration began of the body which later split up into the Angami, Sema, Lhota and Rengma tribes. According to Rengma tradition the first recorded settlement of the undivided body of migrants was near the present Angami village of Khonoma, but neither the name nor exact site is known.<sup>2</sup> As the body moved, the ancestors of the Angamis were dropped in their present country, and the remainder came to rest and founded a village at Therugunyu, slightly above the site of the present village of that name, on Therugu Hill, a prominent peak<sup>3</sup> south of Tsemnyu and at the southern extremity of the present Rengma territory. From this point tradition

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Sema Nagas*, p. 5, *Angami Nagas*, p. 19, *Lhota Nagas*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Another tradition gives Kohima as the first site occupied after Khezha-Kenoma, and relates that the migrants went to Therugunyu *via* Tsetonazi, a hill east of Nerhema, Gariphema and Kwempang.

<sup>3</sup> Known to the Lhotas as Honohoyanto, and important in their migration tradition (vide *Lhota Nagas*, p. 4).

becomes fuller At Therugunyu there were born, of a man named Rententsu, three brothers, Khasa, Thongsu and Senteng These three split the village up into three bodies, which went off in different directions It will be the simplest plan to take the traditional migrations of each body separately.

The first settlement of Khasa and his men was at Kwe-mpang, a site between Thegwepegedenyu and the present Sema village of Mishilimi This village was abandoned in course of time, and the body again split into three parts, one of which turned north-west again and founded Tseminyu, now the second largest of the Western Rengma villages They were led to the site by a deer which fled in front of them as they hunted it <sup>1</sup> When the time for the ceremony of founding the village came, the heads of clans all brought cocks, and it was decided that the village should be founded in the name of the man whose cock crowed first A man called Tsemi <sup>2</sup> of the Tsobinyu clan was so poor that he could only bring an egg His egg, however, miraculously crowed before any of the cocks, and the village was called Tseminyu after him This foundation is reputed to have taken place fifty-two generations ago, a date which can neither be proved right nor wrong. From Tseminyu a party later went north and founded the lower section of Tesophenyu, the biggest of the Western Rengma villages. Others of Khasa's descendants went to a site called Khapenyu, between Therugunyu and Thegwepegedenyu, into which villages it eventually split, owing to repeated Angami attacks on a site difficult to defend, and after a terrifying portent A youth who had sat talking to the girls till far into the night found two spirits fighting outside his "morung" when he returned to it He knew disaster was imminent and tried to drag out his younger brother But in the dark he seized the wrong boy and in a moment the "morung" disappeared in a landslide Finally a colony went from these villages and founded Tsokonkonyu to the west The third body of

<sup>1</sup> Similarly tradition has it that a boar guided St Kentigern to the site on which he was to build a monastery Mackenzie, *Scottish Folk-Lore and Folk-Life*, pp 59, 60

<sup>2</sup> Tsemi is sometimes spoken of as the son of Rententsu and brother of Khasa, Thongsu and Senteng



Khasa's descendants dispersed the most widely of all. From Kwempang they went north, keeping down the slope of the high ridge, and founded Tsegwenyu Phang on a long spur running out to the east below Tseminyu. The ancestors of the Lhotas and Semas were still with them, and the monoliths set up by the former can be seen to this day. It was here that the ancestors of the Semas split off. They refused to co-operate or help in any way, and set off and founded Natsimi to the east. Some of these returned later, and now inhabit some of the northern villages. Later, too, a family of Semas migrated down to Gariphema and thence back to Tseminyu *via* Mishilimi and Therugunyu. In Tseminyu they form the Kentennenyu clan, one of the most influential in the village. The rest of Tsegwenyu Phang, which still included the ancestors of the Lhotas, went on north to Aongshu, a site to the east of Tesophenyu. From here the Lhotas split off and set out for their present country, first leaving their valuable beads buried in pots, with the seed of a big tree in each pot which would grow up and mark the spot. This was meant to show that they were going into a dangerous country from which they might have to return.<sup>1</sup> The Rengmas, too, abandoned Aongshu and split up. One body moved up to the upper section of Tesophenyu, and another body went north and founded Kitagha (which is also called Nsenyu) and later Kotsenyu, the most northerly village of the tribe.

It was from Kitagha that the Eastern Rengmas set off on their long journey. It will, however, be convenient to deal with this separately later, and to record first the tradition of the migration initiated by Khasa's brother Thongsu. This party went west and founded Thongsunyu, between the present villages of Sentenyu and Tsokonkonyu. This village in turn split into three, and Phesinyu, Tsoginyu and Kwempang II were founded, of which only Phesinyu has survived till to-day.<sup>2</sup> Tsoginyu was situated close to the

<sup>1</sup> Old sites show that the Aos once extended to the south of Lungsa, and the Lhotas must have had to fight hard for their land. With the Lhotas as a screen in front of them, the Rengma migration seems to have been a peaceful one, though later the Angamis began to press them hard in the rear.

<sup>2</sup> According to another tradition Thongsunyu was entirely wiped out by witchcraft. See p. 236.

present Sema colony of Rangazumi, and, judging from the size of the site, must have been a place of great importance, probably bigger than any existing Western Rengma village. Its chief claim to fame is that it was the home of the great hero of the Nsenyu clan <sup>1</sup> known to the Rengmas as Vyembı or Pyembı and to the Lhotas as Pembvo <sup>2</sup>. His name means "Mighty Raider," and he was a terror to the Angamis, who were then pressing up from the south. He met his death not in war, but from a spear-thrust in a sudden quarrel with a friend. It is probable that he left no male heirs, for tradition has it that his funeral ceremonies were performed by Venı of Sentenyu, who had married his daughter Ghukhuh. He was buried in his own village, where his grave can be seen to-day with a stone on it roughly carved with the head of a man wearing the three hornbill feathers of a warrior. Till 1930 there grew on the grave an enormous tree, sprung from a seed buried with Vyembı by his dying wish. This was cut down by men of Rangazumi, who hired Baptist converts to do the deed. This act of typical Sema vandalism was suitably punished. Naga villages are apt to depend for their security on the powers of one or two champions, and the death of Vyembı, which is estimated to have taken place at dates varying from nine to three generations ago,<sup>3</sup> had the effect upon Tsoginyu that the death of Gohath had upon the Philistines. The village could no longer withstand the pressure of the Angamis, and was driven north. One party went right across the plains into the Mikir Hills, and founded the colony of Rengmas that lives there still. A second party, including the Kapchaza and Uchongza clans, went straight to Tesophenyu. A third body joined the Lhotas, who had already split off from Khasa's group and colonised the Moilang range. While living among Lhotas they would regard themselves as, and be regarded as, Lhotas. This is why Vyembı, who was of their stock, is both a Rengma and a Lhota hero. In course of time a fresh split took place, and the Rengmas left the Lhotas and turned

<sup>1</sup> The Lhotas claim him for the Humtsoı clan.

<sup>2</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, pp. xiv and 143, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Even nine generations is probably an under-estimate in view of the amount of migratory movement that took place afterwards.

south again, the Mhatongza and allied clans moving first and the Khungza clan later. A village called Gnachekei was founded near the present Phesinyu, and, on this being abandoned, the inhabitants migrated to the upper section of Tesophenyu, whence families have moved to neighbouring villages. The entry into Tesophenyu is vaguely put at about ten generations ago. These migrants, together with those of Khasa's group from whom the Lhotas split off, form to-day the group of Western Rengmas speaking the Kotsenyu language. Those which settled in the southern villages before the Lhotas began to diverge speak the Tseminyu language.

Senteng's group, the third and last of the three original groups, is the least important. They went west and founded the present village of Sentenyu. From there a colony was sent to Choshinyu. This village, harassed by enemies and disease, has moved restlessly from site to site on its ridge in an effort to find peace and health. It has never been strong enough to found colonies, and only a miserable, goitrous, fever-stricken remnant is now left.

It is now time to turn to the migration of the Eastern Rengmas, who form an isolated community of three villages, Sahunyu, Meluri and Lephori, far away to the east, on the Burma side of the Barail watershed. Semas and Angamis lie between them and their original home, and none of them, till I took some with me, had ever visited it, indeed, it was considered tabu to do so, for it is in that direction that souls are believed to go at death. The scene was one of the most dramatic I have ever witnessed. An enormous deputation awaited them below Therugu Hill, where the forefathers of the tribe had once lived. An old man addressed them and said, "Welcome. You are our brethren. We are of one stock. We know that you left us long ago, but the fields, the rocks, and the trees of our land are still yours as well as ours. It is only because you live so far away that you cannot use them. Eat with us and drink with us now, and when you return to your country go in peace." It is known that it is from Kitagha that the Eastern Rengmas left for their present distant home, and the date has been given me as sixteen generations ago. But no

memory survives of what must have been an eventful journey. Tradition has it that the party was led on and on by a serow they were hunting, till they came to a wonderful site where rice and rice beer came out of the bamboos they cut. There they founded a village. The truth probably is that a colony moved off to the east, as other colonies had moved to the west and south, and were forced on and on as the Semas and Angamis closed behind them, till they came to their present land in the Tizu Valley. Nothing is known of the route taken<sup>1</sup> and there are no traditions of any colonies dropped on the way. There never seem to have been more than the present three villages. It is clear that their final approach to their present country was from the north, for their first recorded settlement was at Lusetu, above the present mixed Sema and Angami village of Kutso-khunomi on the east bank of the Tizu. Lusetu was named after a man whose lower half turned into stone in middle age. This stone is said to be still in existence. At Lusetu the migrants appear to have split into two parties. One party crossed the Tizu and founded a village called Palatsi on what is now Khuzami land. They were driven back across the Tizu by Angamis, and settled at Chumi, above Sahunyu. Chumi was destroyed by raiders from Swemi, and the present village of Sahunyu was founded on the bank of the Tizu. This was almost certainly not less than 150 years ago, for Sema tradition relates that the village was already in existence when Khyiashe, the great chief of the Zumomi clan, extended his power across the Tizu six generations ago and founded a village at Khogomi, on what is now Lhoshepu land. The story goes that the Rengmas of Sahunyu were surprised to see pieces of cut bamboo floating down the Tizu from what they thought was uninhabited country. Scouts were sent out, and found Semas building a village. A raid was therefore decided on, but the Semas were on the alert and the raiders found them-

<sup>1</sup> There is an old Sema tradition that people who seem to have been Rengmas inhabited a village called Luchomi on what is now Khivikhu land. The story goes that a party of raiders from this village went mad as the result of eating a poisonous herb in the jungle and came back and attacked their own village.

selves surrounded The Rengmas took refuge in trees on the river bank in the evening, and the Semas, who have always been rather poor climbers, settled down below to wait till morning It was a dark night, and when the Semas heard splashes in the water they thought the Rengmas were answering calls of nature, and shouted out in mockery, "Ease yourselves for the last time" But in the morning the trees were empty The Rengmas had made ropes of their body-cloths and had dropped quietly into the river, and escaped Sahunyu is a unique case of a Naga village on a river bank, a position chosen so that one flank would be protected by the river There they lived precariously, alternately raided and held to tribute by their powerful neighbours, till they were taken over and administered Now the inertia of peace is proving far more deadly than the risks of war, and malaria threatens to wipe the village out in a few years The other party that split off at Lusetu founded a village at Lepuchi, a site just below the highest point of the Naga path between Kotisimi and Sahunyu The ground is now pine forest, but the site is still marked by ditches and bamboo clumps Here there was another split, one party going to Lephori by a route of which the details are not known, and the other to Lokruchu on Jessami land, and thence to Meluri At the time of the split, it is said, those who were to found Lephori carried big baskets which swept a wide track through the jungle, and those that were to found Meluri small baskets that made only a narrow track The doubters in Lepuchi therefore all followed the narrow track, thinking that fewer men had gone that way and it would be easier to get a share of land That is why Meluri has always been much bigger than Lephori Another story told in Lephori is that the village was founded by Sutato of the Katiri clan and his wife Zesuchu of the Socheri clan Zesechu evidently wore the breeches (as far as the wife of a naked husband can be said to do so), for it was she who stuck her iron staff into the ground on the present site and said, "Here must the village be founded" Because it was a woman who did this, the village has always been unwarlike, and has never contained more than a hundred

houses This foundation is said to have taken place nine generations ago, but the Eastern Rengmas always seem to me to be particularly weak in genealogical memory, and it is quite common to find men who do not know the names of their own grandfathers !

### *Clans*

In enumerating and discussing the Rengma clans, it will be necessary to consider those of the Western and Eastern Rengmas separately, the two groups having parted so long ago that no connection between their clan groups is now traceable

The migrations of the Western Rengmas and the return from the Lhotas of a considerable proportion of the tribe after what must have been a long separation from the parent body make the unravelling of their clan system most intricate and difficult Prolonged and careful inquiries seem to show that they fall into the following six exogamous groups

*Group I* This contains the Khinzonyu and Apungza clans, with the Tselanyu (called Tsilaza in the Northern villages), a subclan of the Khinzonyu, the name being derived from *tsela*, a side-shoot of a tree. The Khinzonyu clan represents the clan which was the first to break away at Kheza-Kenoma <sup>1</sup> It is chiefly to be found in Tseminyu, Sentenyu and Chosinyu villages The Tselanyu clan has a curiously interesting origin The ancestress was a woman of the Khinzonyu clan, and from a union of her and a hairy caterpillar the first male ancestor of the subclan was born <sup>2</sup> This species of caterpillar has exceedingly poisonous hairs, and it is firmly believed to this day that if anyone gets stung by inadvertently touching one of these insects, all he has to do is to get a member of the Tselanyu clan to spit on the place and scratch it and the irritation will instantly cease This

<sup>1</sup> See p 4

<sup>2</sup> According to another account she already had a son called Tselä, whose father is unknown, before her liaison with the caterpillar Naga clans are very touchy about any tradition, however old, which seems to indicate a disreputable origin, and the story of Tselä was possibly invented to soothe the pride of what has long been a most respectable and well-to-do subclan It is most unlikely that anyone would invent a story of a scandalous origin Naga custom exacts very heavy penalties for libel of that kind For the Lhota story of the union of a woman and a hairy caterpillar see *Lhota Nagas*, p 195

favour is not, however, always easy to obtain, as it is believed that any person granting it too often will go blind

The Apungza clan in the Northern villages corresponds to the Khinzonyu in the Southern According to the best tradition, Apung was a brother of Khinzong, who went north *via* Aongshu,<sup>1</sup> while his brother stayed in the south

*Group II* This is the largest group, and contains three elements, some clans which colonised the Southern Rengma country direct, some which split off from them, went north to the Lhota country and returned to the south, and some which colonised the Northern villages direct<sup>2</sup> In the Southern villages the clans of this group are the Nsenyu, Rasenyu, Tsobinyu, Kamphunyu and Hembinyu, and in the Northern villages the Mhatongza, Khungroza, Choyishaza, Makhaza, Khasaza and Onangtangza The Nsenyu clan were the leaders of the main migration to the west under Thongsu The Rasenyu clan split off from them over a quarrel about a pig The Tsobinyu and Kamphunyu are closely allied clans which have been adopted as "sons" by the Nsenyu clan One marriage between them has, however, been known in recent years The Kamphunyu clan is believed to have come later from the Angami country, and must have been adopted by the Tsobinyu clan before they were both adopted by the Nsenyu The Hembinyu clan has always travelled with the Kamphunyu on migrations, and may have been adopted by them in the past

The Mhatongza clan is an offshoot of the Nsenyu which went north to the Lhota country and adopted the name of Mhatong, a more immediate ancestor<sup>3</sup> The Khungza and Choyishaza clans, descended from two brothers, Khungro and Choyisha, split off at the same time, about 300 years ago, from the Rengmas, but stayed longer in the Lhota country The above three clans are definitely regarded as belonging to the same exogamous group, and intermarriage

<sup>1</sup> See p 6.

<sup>2</sup> See pp 5, 7

<sup>3</sup> Mhatong must have lived about 300 years ago, since Yanthangsao, an interpreter in the Deputy Commissioner's office at Kohima in 1934, was the eleventh in descent from him Mhatong was born at Tesophenyu, but his grandfather, Nongchangpu, lived at Tsoginyu, and his uncle Chûge, and his descendants remained in the Lhota country and now form part of the Humsol clan.

is, strictly speaking, forbidden. Three cases of marriage between the Khungroza and Mhatongza clans are, however, known. The Makhaza clan also migrated with the Mhatongza, and split off from them. The Khasaza and Onangtangza represent a third element in the group. They were originally linked with the migrants that went west, but, led by Khasa, the ancestor of the first group, formed part of the body which founded the Northern villages direct and never reached the Lhota country.<sup>1</sup>

*Group III* This contains only two clans, Kapchaza and Uchongza, living in the Northern villages. They are linked clans which left Tsoginyu when it was dispersed,<sup>2</sup> but instead of going on into the Lhota country, came back to Tesophenyu. When later the Mhatongza clan returned from the Molang range in the Lhota country, they were protected and befriended by the Kapchaza clan. The two clans became "brothers," and intermarriage is still forbidden between the Kapchaza and the Mhatongza and allied clans. The Uchongza clan, on the other hand, can marry anywhere outside its group.

*Group IV.* This group also contains clans of the Northern villages only. They are Thandoza, Shayitza, Zamwaza and Khezungza. The Thandoza and Khezungza clans are of the same stock, and are believed to represent Rengmas who went directly north with Khasa's group<sup>3</sup>, but the other two clans first joined the Semas when they split off, and went to Natsimi and rejoined the Rengmas later, just as certain clans in Group II first went to the Lhota country and then returned. They were adopted by the Thandoza clan. The Tsalaza subclan of Group I cannot intermarry with this group, the portion of the clan which went to the Northern villages having apparently been adopted by the Thandoza clan.

*Group V* This includes only two clans of the Southern villages, the Sampinyu and Tepinyu. They are regarded as closely related, and were among the first colonists of Tseminyu. The Theguchunyu ("animal charm clan"), found only in Therugunyu and Thegwepegedenyu, are a subclan of the Sampinyu. They are said to be descended from a man who found in the jungle a magic snare of which the noose

<sup>1</sup> See p. 5

<sup>2</sup> See p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 5



was made from the hair of every kind of animal To this day men of this clan are believed to be expert trappers

*Group VI* This contains only the important undivided Kentennenyu clan All the other clans of the Southern villages are classed as Azonyu, and this clan stands alone It is admittedly of Sema origin, though now entirely Rengma in language and custom It can intermarry with any other clan The traditional story is that the founder was a fatherless Sema boy brought by his mother to Tseminyu He was adopted by Kente of the Tepinyu clan, from whom the clan takes its name The boy's own name is not known, but his son was Kechini Kechini's son was killed by a tiger, and no names are known for two or three generations till that of Ratekhi, between whom and the present generation there are seven ancestors whose names are known The Kentennenyu regard the Shekhehimi clan of Semas as their brothers

In Therugunyu and Thegwepegedenyu there is a clan called Chegenyu They are not Rengmas, but Angamis They can intermarry with any Rengma clan and belong to no Rengma group

This multiplicity of clans is obviously not primitive, but the result of subdivision and immigration I have found no trace of a threefold division of the tribe such as one might expect from the analogy of other tribes,<sup>1</sup> but there are clear traces of an old simple division into two Rengmas themselves make the eating or not eating of meat at harvest the test Taking this as a standard, we find that the Nsenyu and all<sup>2</sup> other clans in Group II (except the Tsobinyu, Kamphunyu and Hembinyu, which are known to be adopted), together with two clans of Group III refrain from meat, whereas all the other clans of the other groups eat it at harvest Abstention from meat is regarded as the hallmark of descent from Nsenyu stock

There are two words for "mother" current among both the Northern and Southern groups of the Western Rengmas, but the significance of this is most difficult to estimate The matter is not as simple as it is held to be by Dr Hutton in his Introduction to *The Lhota Nagas* (p xxxi) The use

<sup>1</sup> See *Lo Nagas*, p 13, *Lhota Nagas*, pp 87, 88

<sup>2</sup> The Rasenyu clan eat meat now, but this is known to be an innovation

of the two words does not seem connected with any division into phratries that can now be recognised. In the Northern section all clans now use *aza* for "mother" and *ala* for "grandmother". But if a person's eyes are irritated and painful, he will call his mother *apfu* and his grandmother *azakhi*, quite regardless of what clan he or she may belong to. The rarer term thus seems to have become a mere charm. It is said, however, that the terms *apfu* and *azakhi* were first brought into the tribe by the two clans of Group III, the Kapchaza and Uchongza, and were adopted from them by the Mhatongza and allied clans whom they protected. Thence the terms spread to the whole Northern group. Similarly, there are two words, *avyu* and *apsu*, current in the Southern group, of which the former is the far commoner. A woman of the Tselanyu clan *must* be addressed by her children as *apsu* and by her grandchildren as *agu*. If they do not do so, their eyes will become inflamed. Except in this case there is no connection in the Southern group between sore eyes and the word used for "mother," or any compulsion to use a particular term to a woman of a certain clan. Women of the Sampinyu, Tepinyu and Khinzonyu clans *can*, however, be addressed as *apsu* and *agu*. Women of all other clans are called *avyu* by their children and *ashi* by their grandchildren. The use of an alternative word for mother seems therefore to be specially connected with clan Groups I, III and V, all of which were among the clans which originally comprised the tribe and never migrated elsewhere.

The names of the Eastern Rengma clans (*ikuri*) can be most conveniently given in tabular form. For the three villages they are as follows

<i>Meluri</i>	<i>Lephori</i>	<i>Sahunyu</i>
Tsori	{ Socheri Yoheri Lokheri }	Tsori
Pochori	Pochori	Khokhikesari
Ngugweri	Ngugweri	Ngusori
Nguteri	Katiri	
Nguri		Nguri
Nisuri		

In each village the first clan, which in Lephori is subdivided into three linked clans, is definitely regarded as "different" from the rest. They call their mothers *avo* instead of *aza*, and observe somewhat different "gennas,"—sacrificing no pig before clearing their fields, for instance. While there are some clans common to all three villages, each has one or more which the others have not. All, except the three linked clans of Lephori, are exogamous clans which can take wives from any other clan. Marriage within the three linked clans is forbidden. The Ngugweri clan in Meluri is believed to have migrated there after the other clans were already settled. There is no sure tradition of their origin. That the Rengmas and Lhotas were originally one tribe is certain, and it is hard to resist identifying the Nguri clan of the Eastern Rengmas with the Lhota Nguli clan.<sup>1</sup> It may well be that when the Eastern Rengmas split off there were still Rengma and Lhota clans of the same name.

Among the Eastern Rengmas it is not at all unusual for a man to leave his own clan and be adopted by that of his mother. Sometimes this is due to a quarrel, or sometimes a man's own father cannot help him to begin the series of Feasts of Merit,<sup>2</sup> while his mother's clan offer to do so. There is no ceremony, and no payment is made to the adopting clan. For a few generations the man's descendants will not marry into his original clan. This practice<sup>3</sup> is almost unknown among the Western Rengmas, who believe it would lead to the extinction of the clan abandoned. The only case of a change of clan I know of among them occurred at Tsemnyu. There a woman of the Kentennenyu clan married a man of the Sampinyu clan and bore him a son. On her husband's death she married a Tepinyu man, and her small son became Tepinyu.

#### *Appearance*

In cast of feature Rengmas are indistinguishable from Lhotas and Semas. The colour of the skin is light brown, turning to darker brown on the parts of the body exposed to the sun. The complexion is sallow, and the girls, though

<sup>1</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> Both among the Western and Eastern Angamis cases of adoption into the mother's clan occur, but they are very rare.

of cheerful countenance, never have the tinge of pink in their cheeks one often sees on girls in Angami villages. The hair in childhood has a brownish tinge, but turns black early in life. Usually it is straight, but wavy, or even curly, hair is not uncommon, and marks the Negrito strain which undoubtedly exists in the race.<sup>1</sup> The nose is broad and the whole appearance slightly Mongolian. The Eastern Rengmas exactly resemble the Western parent stock, save for a curious look of perennial youth that I have often noticed in the men. Individuals who have looked quite young to me have turned out on inquiry to be grandfathers of some years' standing. The explanation must be the care which is always taken to remove every trace of beard and moustache and keep the hair carefully cut. They always look noticeably neat. The Western Rengmas, on the other hand, are often most untidy about the head, and beards and moustaches on elderly men are more common. The Eastern Rengma men, save in Lephori, where a cloth is worn round the waist with the ends hanging down in front, are careful to pluck out all pubic hair. To perform this painful operation the fingers are smeared with a sticky sap. No privacy is observed and men will sit about in groups chatting while they depilate. The hair under the arms is, however, not removed, as it is believed that to do so would weaken the muscles. With the women the opposite is the case. Since a heavy growth of hair under the arms denotes plentiful pubic hair, which is disliked, the armpits are plucked clean. They do not pluck out their pubic hair as men do,<sup>2</sup> but reduce it by the curious method of pressing a piece of open-meshed basket against that part and singeing off with a burning pine splinter the hairs protruding through. Depilation is not a Western Rengma custom.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Hutton, *Census of India*, Vol. I, Pt. I, pp. 442 *seqq.* Tradition relates that little jungle folk existed in the North Cachar Hills till comparatively recent times, and that all the survivors were herded into a cave near Hafong by a Kachari king and burnt alive. Curiously enough, the last Negritos in Ceylon are said to have been exterminated in exactly the same way (Spittel, *Far-Off Things*, p. 69).

<sup>2</sup> It is said it would be "shameful" if they did. Beyond that no reason is given.

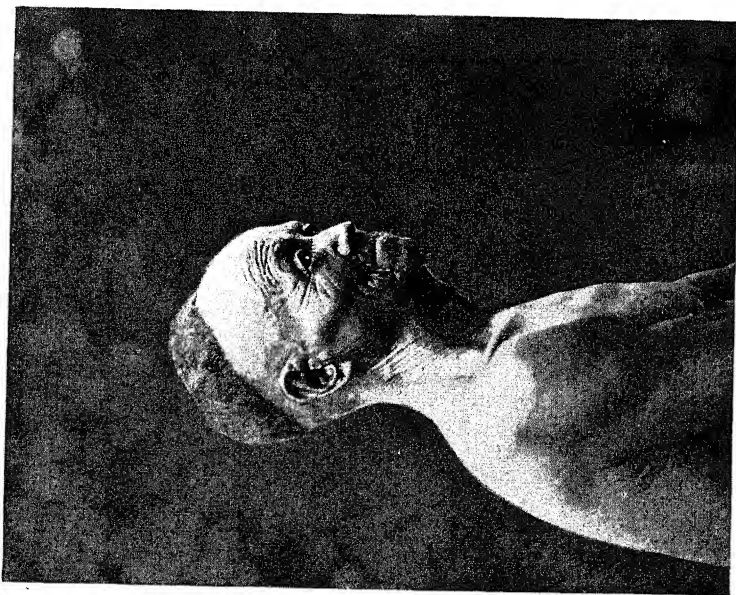
<sup>3</sup> The narrow "lengta" (see p. 20) worn in villages of the Northern group leaves most of the person exposed, and young men have recently taken to shaving their pubic hair. This is strongly disapproved of by the old men.

The style of hair cut of Eastern Rengma men exactly resembles that of Semas and Lhotas. Below a line running round the head just above the level of the tops of the ears all hair is shaved close. Down to that line the hair falls straight from the crown all round. The Western Rengmas shave the head much farther up, leaving a patch of hair no bigger than a small skull-cap. They use pieces of broken brass as razors, but the Eastern Rengmas use small iron razors, which they call *alese*. To cut the edges of the top-knot level the edge of a "dao" is put under the hair at the right level and the hair cut off against it by tapping with a piece of wood. Western Rengmas often use bazaar scissors for the purpose, but the Eastern Rengmas still keep to the old method. No particular precautions are taken to conceal the cuttings, but the Western Rengmas are careful not to throw them away near a plant called *zyembo* (A) or *alkhushi* (B), the leaves of which are intensely irritating to the skin. If a hair came in contact with one of these leaves the owner would suffer from sores on the head.

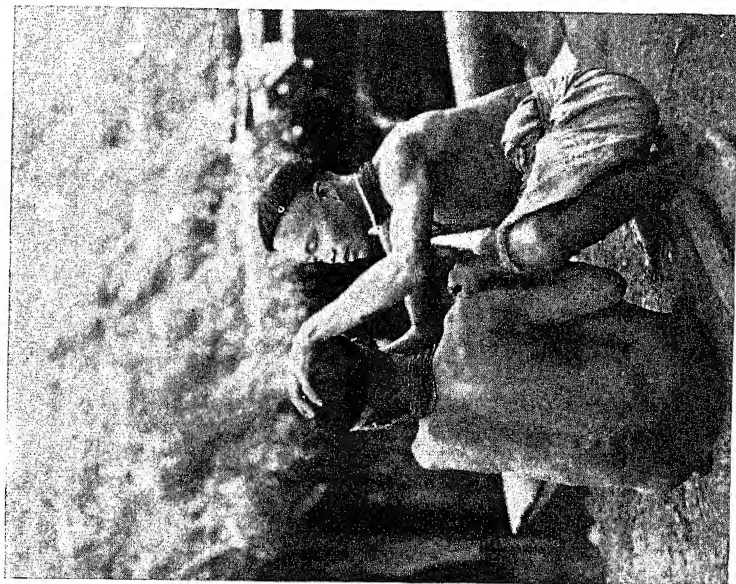
The untidiness of Western Rengma men's heads is terrible. One would think that it was always tabu for them to cut their hair. The villages of Tsokonkonyu, Sentenyu, Therugunyu and Thegwepegedenyu are particularly bad. In them, after giving any Feast of Merit from the second on, no male of the household may cut his hair till the next *Ngada* ceremony<sup>1</sup>. As nearly all such feasts are given before the millet-sowing, this means a wait from early spring to late autumn without a hair-cut. Other villages only prohibit hair-cutting till after the millet is sown, except that if a feast is given after the sowing, the prohibition extends till harvest. The reason for this tabu is that a hair-cut involves a clean shave of the sides and back of the head, and this is believed to cause the household stock of food to be used up with undue speed. The Eastern Rengmas have no prohibitions of any kind.

Girls in both sections of the tribe are supposed to keep their heads shaved till they are betrothed, when the hair is allowed to grow long. Nowadays, however, Western

<sup>1</sup> See p. 173



A MAN OF TSEMINYU, WESTERN RENGMA, SHOWING THE  
OLD STYLE OF WEARING HAIR



HAIR-CUTTING : EASTERN RENGMA



Rengma girls are beginning to abandon the old custom of keeping the head shaved till the ear ornaments called *nyeshe* (A) or *asüngkhu* (B) are assumed a few months before marriage,<sup>1</sup> and to let their hair grow long soon after puberty, even if not betrothed. According to Western Rengma custom, anyone may shave the head of a little girl, but when she has attained puberty it may only be shaved by a man of her own clan. Under no circumstances may a man cut the hair of a girl he is going to marry. If he does, the food in his house will run short. The Eastern Rengmas have no such rule, and among them girls' heads may be shaved by anyone. The hair of adult women is sometimes loosely tied on the nape of the neck, and sometimes allowed to hang down on the shoulders. The combs (*phekü*, A, *hapü*, B, *ahüpu* or *alakrü*, C) are very simple. The teeth of the combs used by Western Rengmas of both sexes and by Eastern Rengma women are thin pieces of bamboo about six inches long, held apart and in position by two wooden spacers in such a way that either end of the instrument can be used. The comb used by Eastern Rengma men is unlike any other Naga comb I know. The top of a piece of cane about nine inches long is split, and cross-pieces of bamboo are inserted and bound with cotton to keep them firm and apart. The result is a comb with a long handle.

When very busy in their fields Rengmas do not wash at all, and when the jungle has just been burnt they are as black as ink. Even when times are slack ablutions are not over-frequent. Yet they have their own substitutes for soap. The most popular, and one used by all sections of the tribe, is the berries of a tree called *ngyu bing* (A), *atongpya* (B) or *akhokya* (C). The Western Rengmas also use the shredded bark of a tree called *penyu* (A) or *ameyi* (B). For washing clothes the shredded root of the sword-bean (*khungyung*, A, *akhuyung*, B, *akhozyok*, C) is used.<sup>2</sup> The Southern section of the Western Rengmas also use the shredded bark of a tree they call *tarhu* for washing clothes.

Tattooing is not practised.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> The Lhotas use the beans, but not the root, as soap (see *Lhota Nagas*, p. 83).



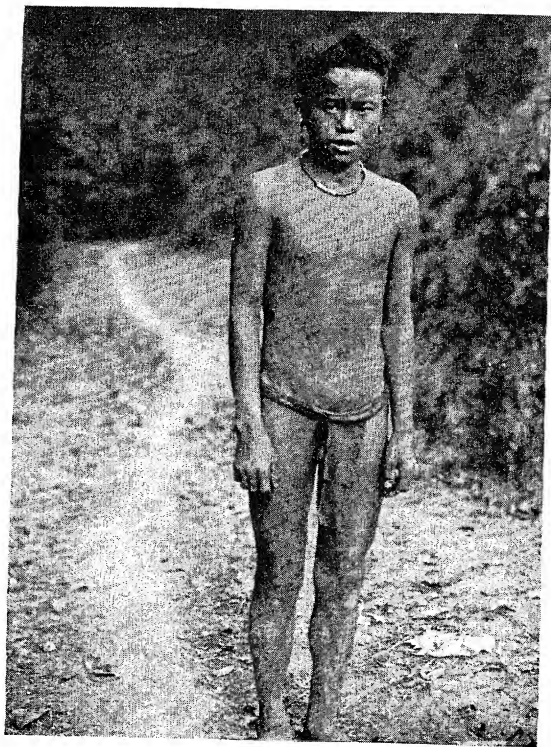
*Dress*

The dress of the Rengmas has changed in comparatively recent years. Probably it is not so very long since the men throughout the tribe were entirely naked save for a body-cloth, as those of the Eastern Rengmas are to this day. Of the women the string of beads now worn round the waist under the skirt was probably the sole garment. Certain it is, if a very definite tradition is to be believed, that among the Western Rengmas, up to two generations ago, both sexes went naked till about the time of marriage<sup>1</sup>. It is curious that one finds no similar tradition among the Lhotas, who are so closely allied with them and with whom they migrated so long.

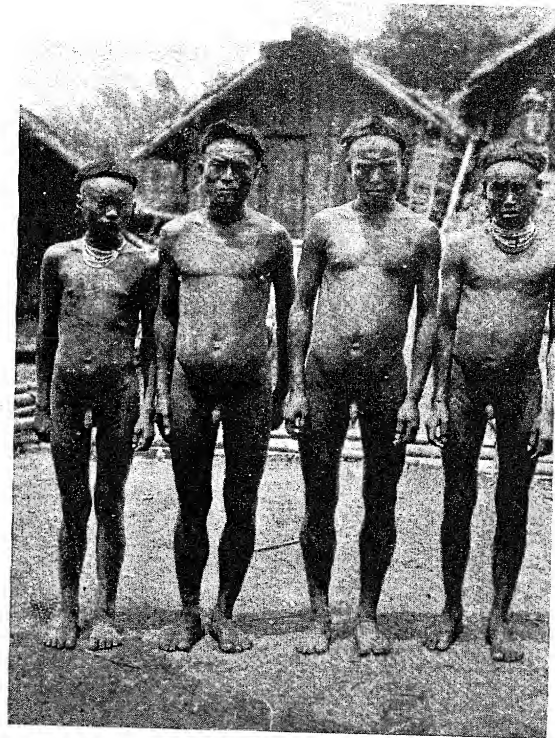
In the old days, about the time of marriage, a man would put on a "lengta" of the Sema pattern (*nya tong*, A, *khukhe azi*—old man's covering—B). This consists of a band of dark blue cloth about four inches broad with a thin red stripe, rolled and tied round the waist, and hanging down in a flap twelve inches long in front. Nowadays it is confined to the Kotsenyu group of villages. A man who has killed a tiger is allowed to have three circles of cowries ("tiger's eyes") down each side of the outer flap. The Mikir Hills Rengmas have taken to "dhotis" and plainsmen's dress, and in Chosinyu Angami dress is worn. In the Tseminyu group and often in Tesophenyu a strip of blue muslin (*pechenyu nya*, A, *mpoza azi*—"male covering"—B) is tied to a belt behind and brought between the legs and over it to form a flap in front. This is of quite recent origin, and is directly due to the mockery of Gurkhalis settlers, now happily expelled. No one has a filthier mind than the Gurkhalis, and no one is more ready to draw attention to what he considers indecency in others. I was once asked if I would close a main Naga path running past the outpost at Wakching in the Konyak country on the ground that the sepoy's wives felt embarrassed when they saw naked Konyaks. I refused, and suggested they should look the other way. It is considered unlucky for a boy to put on

<sup>1</sup> In very early days both men and women probably went naked throughout life. See the folk-tale of the Finding of Cotton, p. 273.





A YOUTH OF KOTSENYU: WESTERN RENGMA



MEN OF MELURI: EASTERN RENGMA

a "lengta" for the first time in the evening His father or elder brother puts it on him for the first time in the morning

Among the Eastern, or Naked, Rengmas the men are ordinarily dressed as their name suggests, save in Lephor, where a strip of cloth (*ashutso*) is worn in the day only tied round the waist so that the two ends hang down in front In the other villages of the group body-cloths are worn for warmth and in the presence of strangers, but no man has the least objection to walking and sitting about in the village stark naked At dances, however, a strip of white cloth is invariably worn with one end hanging down in front and one behind The ends are often embroidered in red.

Men's body-cloths (*pi*, A, *atsü*, B and C) are of various patterns, and their differences are important as being indicative of the status and prowess of the wearer Those of the Western and Eastern Rengmas differ widely Among the former the cloth which a man wears who has given no Feasts of Merit and has never taken a head is called *rhukho* (A) or *hekho* (B) It is white, with four narrow black bands This is worn by young and old alike, the only difference being that a boy will wear one of two or three bands, according to his size If once he has put on a cloth with the full number of four bands he may never, even for a moment, again wear one with a lesser number Another cloth for which no ceremonies are required is called *pi mkhung* (A) or *moyet tsü* (B) This is regarded as essentially a young man's cloth It is dark blue with a very broad white median band embroidered with a thin zigzag pattern in red at the edges Beyond these two clothes two are permitted to givers of Feasts of Merit The first is called *zonyu pi* (A) or *alung tsü* or *Kethi tsu* (B), and is the cloth which the ordinary well-to-do man wears Curiously enough, though its name means "stone cloth," it is worn by men who have not yet attained to the great Feast of Merit marked by the setting up of monoliths It resembles closely a cloth worn by rich men in the neighbouring Sema villages It is dark blue with four narrow red bands at the top and bottom and four broader white median bands The top median band may or may not be embroidered with

a zigzag pattern in red. This cloth can be assumed after the *Kethi* Feast of Merit. To perform the very expensive stone-dragging ceremony entitles a man of the Northern villages to wear a cloth called *akha harya*. This, which is very rarely seen, is exactly like the "stone-cloth," save that the two middle median bands are embroidered with a lozenge pattern in red.

To perform the head-taking ceremony entitles a Western Rengma to wear a cloth exactly like the young man's cloth (*pi mhrung*, A, *moyet tsu*, B), save that the white median band is replaced by one, or nowadays sometimes two, bands elaborately painted in black. This cloth is called *arrhu hlu pi* ("enemies' teeth cloth") (A) or *anikezu tsu* ("sap-painted cloth") (B). The upper, and usually the sole, band is identical with the band on the cloth called *rükhusu* by the Lhotas,<sup>1</sup> who obtain their bands from the Rengmas. The pattern on this band is traditional, and is regarded as representing decapitated men interspersed with the men who have taken their heads. These bands used to be made in both Tsemnyu and Tesophenyu, but the old craftsman in the former village is dead, and no one has arisen to take his place, the work being regarded in some vague way as derogatory. In Tesophenyu, on the other hand, the tradition is vigorously alive, and one Achukha is striking out on a line of his own and introducing a second band. On a cloth which I obtained in 1931 the lower band by him was decorated as follows, taking the objects from left to right: a warrior's tail, tiger's eyes, a cow elephant, a bull elephant, tiger's eyes, a tiger, a domestic mithan, a wild mithan, tiger's eyes, a bear, a sambhur, tiger's eyes, a warrior's "tail," "a very bad man whose head has been cut off," and, underneath, a python swallowing a barking deer. On another cloth I have seen a pictorial record of the rescue of a man from a tiger by the wearer.

The Eastern Rengmas have their own series of body-cloths entirely distinct from that of the Western Rengmas, from whom they probably parted before the tribe knew how to weave. A man's first cloth in Meluri is white. It is

<sup>1</sup> See illustration facing p. 10 of *Lhota Nagas*.

called *alutho* if it is entirely white and *khamheru tsu* if the seams are stitched with red and blue. In Lephorí an unmarried boy may wear a cloth (*nizet tsu*) with two narrow bands of red and blue, but he must discard this for a white cloth (*atsi mli*) on marriage, only assuming it again after he has taken a head. In Sahunyu a young man may wear a cloth called *khoro khr tsu*, which is white with three very narrow red and blue bands and an edging top and bottom of red, white and blue. The giving of the first Feast of Merit entitles a man to wear a cloth called *kachr tsu* bought from the Kalyo-Kengyu villages to the east, which is dark blue with pairs of narrow grey bands, and ornamented with small spots of red dog's hair. A man who has given the full series of Feasts of Merit wears a handsome cloth (*lupu tsu*) bought in Manipur, and reminiscent of Tangkhul Naga cloths. It is red with broad dark blue bands edged with white lightly embroidered in red. Two small red-and-white tassels are attached to the middle of the cloth. The head-taker's cloth (*ami tsu*) is dark blue, with a narrow white band every two inches and a red band one inch broad every third band. Two of the white bands near the middle are embroidered with a simple pattern in blue and red. Here again the Sahunyu cloth differs, being simply their boys' cloth (*nizet tsu*) with the addition of a red edging at the top and bottom.

The Western Rengma woman wears a skirt, an underskirt, a body-cloth, and sometimes an additional breast-cloth. Dr. Brown,<sup>1</sup> writing when the Rengma country was in process of being annexed, describes the women of Tseminyu thus, not without a little Victorian unction. "Women are seen to-day in passing through the village of Themakedima [*i.e.* Tseminyu]. They are dressed similarly to the Angami Naga women, but scarcely wear their clothes so modestly: the common striped cotton sheet is used as a skirt from the waist downwards. The usual loose sheet is over the upper part of the body, which they do not seem so careful in covering as the Angamis, the breast being frequently left quite bare.

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Exploration of the Angami Naga Country*, pp. 25, 26 (Shillong Assam Secretariat Press, 1874).

The hair is parted in the middle, and gathered over the ears behind with a loose knot, resting on the nape of the neck "

A Rengma girl is first clad in nothing, and later in a string of beads. Some time before the first signs of puberty appear she assumes a narrow skirt about eighteen inches deep (*nya tasngu*, A, *amenyr akhukowa*, B), the top third of which is grey and the bottom two-thirds dark blue with very narrow red bands. This must be put on for the first time in the morning. At the first sign of puberty she wears an outer skirt (*nya*, A, *kekhalong*, B), which is lengthened as she gets older. It is twenty-two to twenty-six inches deep, and is worn tightly bound round the waist. It is dark blue with very thin red lines and a white median band five inches broad in the middle. If the husband of the wearer has done the mithan sacrifice, the edges of the white band are embroidered in red. The Eastern Rengma woman wears only a single skirt (*konyu men*). It is far narrower than that of the Western Rengma woman, varying from eleven to sixteen inches in depth, and is worn loosely tucked into the waist-string in front, so that it droops down over the buttocks, rather after the fashion of that of a Konyak woman. The chief ornamentation is down the middle line of the buttocks, reminding one somewhat of the Biets Kuki pattern. Skirts of Eastern Rengma women indicate very clearly the Feasts of Merit given by their wearers' husbands. That of the wife of a man who has given no Feast of Merit is white with a blue border at the bottom, very narrow red and blue bands, and a strip of red embroidery down the posterior middle line. Of that of the wife of a man who has advanced to the *Atsak* feast the top six inches are white and the bottom six inches dark blue. There are narrow red lines on a dark-blue ground in the centre and the usual embroidery behind. When a man has given the full series of Feasts of Merit red and blue lines embellish the white at the top of his wife's skirt and there are lines of white stitches between the lines of red in the centre portion. This is an exact tally, each line of white stitches indicating one head of cattle killed at the final feast. In Sahunyu the lines in the middle are rather nearer together than in Meluri,

and there is more posterior embroidery The skirt which proclaims the completion of the Feasts of Merit is called *kule men* When carrying water women wear triangular skirt protectors (*ashushe*) of bamboo spathe on the buttocks to keep their clothes dry As often as not an Eastern Rengma woman will wear no skirt at all, merely slipping her body-cloth down and tucking it in round her waist Even this, I am told, is often discarded in the house when only the family are present, and she will sit about completely naked Unlike the Ao girl, who only lets her cloth fall aside and uncover her breasts when in the presence of other women or of men whom she knows intimately and are not of her phratry, the Rengma woman, save in the presence of complete strangers of whom she is suspicious, has no objection to leaving the upper part of her body bare In most villages nothing is worn above the waist when working in the fields, but the staring eyes of Gurkhalis in the past have caused women in Tseminyu, and to a less extent in Teso-phenyu, to wear a square of blue bazaar muslin (*sudung*, A, *khukhongsha*, B) crossed over the body and tied on each shoulder Over this a body-cloth is worn, usually plain dark blue, or resembling the man's cloth called *rhukho* or *hekho*, save that each black band must have a line of white thread down the middle, since only men may wear solid bands These cloths are also often worn as outer skirts But on high days and holidays girls and women who can afford them wear dark blue cloths decorated with lines of cowries and cowries sewn in fours to represent stars These are called "cowrie-sewn cloths" (*tesu kekha pr*, A, *aho ha tsu*, B) Wives and daughters of men who have done the mithan sacrifice in the series of Feasts of Merit wear a cloth edged top and bottom with cowries and ornamented with two lines of cowries, with circles of cowries between them about four inches in diameter, representing tigers' eyes There is often a whorl of red dog's hair in the middle of each circle, and the wing cases of iridescent beetles (*Chrysochroa bivittata*) may ornament the edges of the cloth This cloth is called *khaho*, A, or *atemye anyo kezekiwa*, B Eastern Rengma women wear a white body cloth



In wet weather all Rengmas wear rain-shields on their backs. The Western Rengmas often buy theirs from their Angami or Lhota neighbours, but the old pattern, which is still largely worn, consists merely of interlaced palm leaves and is called *zembo hyo* (A) or *akhiush owa* (B). This is the only pattern permissible at the rain-making ceremony.<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Rengmas buy all their rain-shields from the Angamis and call them *enwa*. In addition, they wear a rain-hat (*alowe*) which they make themselves. It is made of pandanus leaves between two layers of open bamboo basket-work, and is conical in shape, with a short peak in front and a long peak projecting over the nape of the neck behind.

### *Ornaments*

Like the Lhota, and in contrast with the Ao and Sema, the Rengma is no great lover of ornaments. A couple of strings of beads, and ivory armlets if he possesses them, are enough for every day. Nevertheless, he has plenty he can put on when full dress is to be worn. Here again customs have changed in recent years. The suppression of head-hunting has made the winning of a warrior's insignia difficult, but sooner than let the use of goodly ornaments die out the rules have been relaxed among the Western Rengmas, and money will now buy many rights that in former times only the bringing home of an enemy's head could earn. The pressure has come from the young men, who have really taken the law into their own hands, and the old men have never ceased to disapprove. The Eastern Rengmas have been administered so short a time that they have not yet fully appreciated the effect that the Pax Britannica is bound to have on their customs, and still adhere to their old rules. It is therefore convenient to describe separately the ornaments of the two groups and the rights of wearing them.

Among the Western Rengmas the bear's-hair wig (*tegwemvü*, A, *temukhu*, B) used to be worn only by a man who had done the head-taking genna. Now, however, any man can wear it. It is precisely the same as that worn by other Naga tribes. Only a warrior, however, can add to it

<sup>1</sup> See p. 89

hornbill feathers (*gū nyong*, A, *aowa anu*, B) These are always three in number, and are held in place by little bamboo supports (*gu nyong kong*, A, *apiki*, B) loosely inserted into the quill, so that the feathers turn in the wind. In the old days raw hide helmets (*ntse*, A, *akhuhe*, B) ornamented in front with a pair of horns cut from a hornbill's beak and fringed with red goat's hair and black human hair used to be worn, but they are now obsolete, and the only one I have ever seen is kept as an heirloom in Thegwepegedenyu Large tufts of cotton wool are never worn in the ears as by Semas, Lhotas and Aos At most a man will wear a small tuft low down on the edge of the helix Large brass rings (*sanyū mveng*, A, *atsonzu shanyuwa*, B) used to be worn in the lobe of the ear, but nowadays only one or two old men keep up the custom Yet they are considered a traditional part of the male outfit, and most households own a pair, which is included among the male ornaments with which a ceremony is performed on the night before a Feast of Merit <sup>1</sup> The commonest ear ornaments are small spirals of brass from which a red tassel dangles (*nyeng*, A; *athangyi*, B), worn in the lobe A man who has taken a head may wear long scarlet goat's-hair ear ornaments of the Angami pattern (*mpeng gerāshu*, A, *awungthayr*, B) The most popular flower for the ear is a wild white scented lily, known as *toghu tughotung* ("crow's shell beads"), A, or *asha'a* ("shell beads") B Beads (*tu*, A, *ayong*, B) vary greatly according to the taste of the wearer Most men wear a rather tight bead collar (*khomitu*, A, *asukhekhong*, B), besides one or more longer strings Usually one of the sets of two or three strings (*tukhering*, A, *aryamshi kenr kechi*, B) has a piece of conch-shell at the back Cylindrical conch-shell beads are also popular To all shell ornaments certain tabus are attached A man who has bought absolutely new ones remains in the village for a day, and no one going to the fields will visit his house Further, in the Southern group the whole village observes one day's "genna" in March, called *tuchong kehr ghr kehr kennu* ("shell bead polishing metal armlet polishing genna") for

<sup>1</sup> See p 183

all the shell beads and ornaments in the village. No ceremony is performed, but if this "genna" is not observed the ears of rice will be white and empty. Among the Eastern Rengmas no "genna" of the whole village is observed, but a man buying new beads between sowing and harvest gets the seller to place them on the floor, and does not pick them up till night. If he touches them before dark he must keep away from his fields next day. The valuable yellow beads known in Assamese as "deo moni" (*tūpung*, A, *mezetsū*, B) are not very common. Boars' tushes (*nyu hū*, A, *asatsū ha*, B) are worn only by youths. Necklaces made of the seeds of the wild banana (*khongkwe* or *kwenshū*, A, *mennga khamuwa*—"light leaves"—B) are sometimes worn by both men and women, and women sometimes use them as waist-bands, into which they tuck their inner skirts. But they are not nearly as common as they are among the Lhotas, and, except for a few strings made at Therugunyu, are all bought from Angamis, who in turn get them from the Zemi (Kacha) Nagas. The standard length of a string in trade is the height of an average man's forehead above the ground. In full dress a man who has taken a head may wear on his chest the curious ornament known as "enemy's teeth" (*arrhū hu*, A, *ayr ha*, B). This is of the Lhota pattern,<sup>1</sup> a narrow slat of wood with cowries representing the teeth, interwoven red cane and yellow orchid skin in the middle representing the open mouth, and a tuft of red goat's hair at either end representing the blood pouring from the lips. The human-hair tails worn are of the Sema pattern, and are often bought from that tribe. The straight tail (*khingrung*, A, *asu khu*, B) can be worn by any man. To win the right to wear the long curved tail (*gu chete khū*, A, *achangtha 'sū khu*, B) a man must either do the head-taking "genna" or perform the full series of Feasts of Merit. The Tseminyu name means "mithan horn tail," and recalls the original simple receptacle for "panjis," but the elaborate double pattern, in the making of which craftsmen in Tesophenyu specialise, is more popular than it is among other tribes. The tail, of either pattern, is suspended

<sup>1</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 14

sometimes from one baldrick (*khurha*, A, *asü khul*, B), or sometimes from two crossed over the chest. This ornament is one of the very few which the Rengmas have not borrowed without modification from their neighbours. It is white, about four inches broad, with a zigzag pattern in red embroidered on it. When the wearer has taken a head a fringe of red hair six to eight inches deep is added to the bottom edge. The result is something between the Sema and the Angami ornament. Cowrie aprons (*nya kekha*, A, *azi kekheyn*, B) of either the large Sema pattern or the small, old-fashioned Lhota<sup>1</sup> pattern are worn with full dress. A man who has got first spear at a tiger-killing has three small circles of cowries ("tiger's eyes") on the black cloth at the top of his apron. Gauntlets (*veng khavu*, A, *akwang khekong*, B), which as a rule are of the Sema pattern, though old Lhota fringeless gauntlets are sometimes seen, are still only worn by men who have done the head-taking "genna". Leggings (*pha keping*, A, *achü keye*, B) are bought from Angamis, and can be worn by anyone.

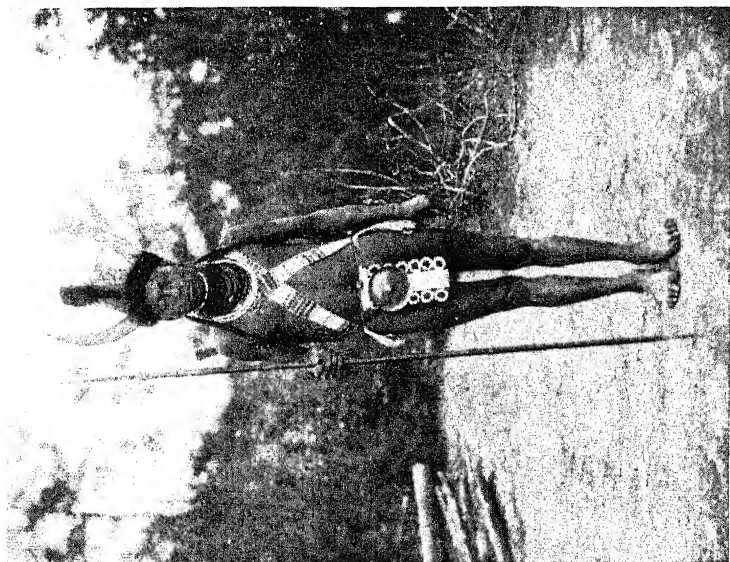
So far I have dealt with ornaments which will be familiar to readers of former monographs in this series. Those of the Eastern Rengmas will, many of them, be novel, for they come from the hitherto undescribed Kalyo-Kengyu tribe to the east. This tribe makes ornaments for the inhabitants of an immense area, and if their country is ever administered their arts and crafts will well repay study. The rights to ornaments are very clearly defined among the Eastern Rengmas, and most of those described below can only be worn by a man who has either taken a head or helped to burn a hostile village. So keen are the young men to win these ornaments, and so hard are they to gain now, that Meluri village recently asked as a special favour that they might be allowed to supply free any coolies I may want for a punitive expedition in future, in the hope that they may be in at a death or a burning. In time they will have to relax their rules, as all administered tribes tend to do, but they have not done so yet.

The bear's-hair fillet (*arwuno*) is of the Sema pattern, but

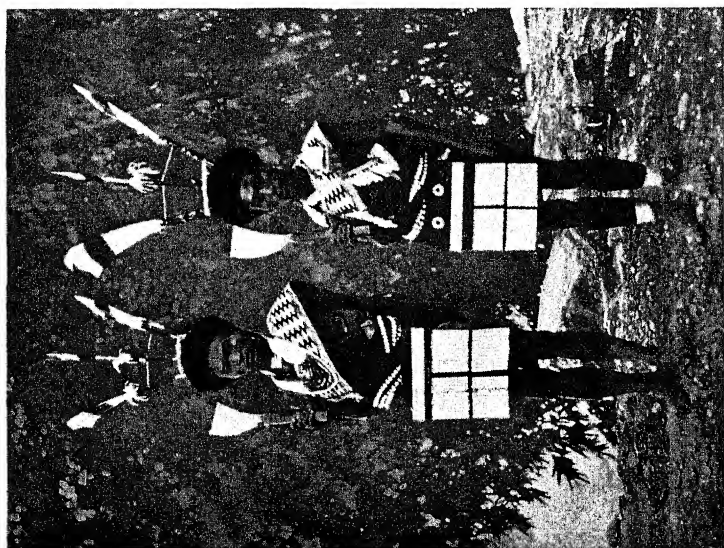
<sup>1</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 14

the Eastern Rengmas differ from all other Nagas with whom I am acquainted in never wearing hornbill feathers (*arochi kene*) in it. Instead one for each head taken is stuck in the face of the shield. When dancing, men invariably wear a narrow fillet (*asuni*) of freshly split bamboo tied so that the two ends stick out in front of the head like horns. The contrast with the black hair of the wearer is very effective. In full dress a tall red hat (*akhurhi*) of red cane ornamented with orchid skin, with thin strips of horn projecting from each side, is worn. These hats are imported from the Kalyo-Kengyu country, and often have a tall crest of red goat's hair over the crown. They are identical with those called *armmram khurong* by the Aos.<sup>1</sup> Boars' tushes (*asuchi aha*) are very rarely seen, and can only be worn as a necklace by a man who has taken a head. Another neck ornament which is confined to warriors is called *mikha*, and is peculiar in that it consists of tiger's canine teeth, things which it is tabu for most Nagas even to touch, except when taking an oath. Hence a man who obtains one must observe five days' "genna" before he can put it on. The two teeth, separated by a short bar of bamboo running through them and embellished with brass spirals at the ends, hang on the chest from a long string round the neck. The string often has short lengths of brass twisted round it, and is attached at either end to a single boar's tush, which lies on the curve of the back of the neck. A very fine ornament called *rogwezo*, of Tangkhul make, used to be worn in Lephor by men who had taken heads. The only specimen I have seen consists of a necklet one and a half inches deep, of red cane ornamented with cowries and yellow orchid skin. From each side of the join in front there hangs over the breast a broad pendant a foot long of alternate bands of red and white porcupine quills, ending in a fringe of cowries. Rich men wear very broad bead necklaces (*azokha*) of the Eastern Angami pattern. Conch-shell beads (*sanatsu*) are also sometimes worn. The ordinary necklace, which anyone can wear, consists of several strings of red beads (*techizo* or *khameru azo*) which are traded through

<sup>1</sup> See *Ao Nagas*, p. 44



EASTERN RENGMA IN FULL DRESS



WESTERN RENGMAS IN FULL DRESS



from Kohima bazaar or brought by Angami pedlars. Rich men occasionally wear necklaces of old beads (*anvu*) of a peculiar yellowish-green shade. No additions to the existing stock are ever obtained now, but there is no tradition that the beads were brought with the Eastern Rengmas on their migration from the west. On the other hand, it is said that up till fairly recently they came by trade from village to village through the Angami country. The Western Rengmas set great store by these, and I will deal with them more fully when I come to describe their women's ornaments. A popular necklace with young bucks on festival days is a narrow collar of a double band of interwoven red cane and yellow orchid skin (*arozi*). Tufts of red hair are set to lie opposite ways in each of the two bands, so that they stick out in all directions. The helix of the ear is not pierced to take wads of cotton wool such as the Semas and Lhotas wear, and at most a small tuft is worn in the lobe, and that only rarely. Usually a man's only ear ornaments are a few small brass rings (*anaru*) in the edge of the helix and the lobe. These rings used to be large, and it is said that small ones came to be worn because they are less likely to catch in the jungle. Only men wear flowers in their ears, it is not considered proper for women to do so. Red is the favourite colour and "bachelor's buttons" (*pochtorr*), canna (*zuwatorr*), hibiscus (*nuwitorr*) and cockscomb (*atorr khukhusowa*—"bending flower") are specially grown for the purpose. In the summer a wild white lily (*shanila*) is also sometimes worn. When in full dress a small circle of cotton and red hair (*anakha*) is often hung round the ear. This can be worn by anyone who has been on a raid, whether it was successful or not. A warrior who has taken a head, however, may wear suspended from the lobe of each ear a long ornament of hair which is practically identical with that worn by the Konyaks far to the north, and resembles nothing in between. If they are made of hair from the head of an enemy they are called *ashe*, and if of goat's hair *aroche*. The top of the ornament is a little cone of alternate bands of red and black hair, and from this long hair hangs down, often to the wearer's shoulder. When goat's hair



is used it is usually dyed red. In these days of enforced peace a man who has had no chance of taking a head will sometimes wear these ornaments with strands of red wool instead of hair. They are not "the real thing," but they look better than nothing. Heavy brass bracelets (*asave* or *ashapo*) can be worn by anyone. The gauntlets (*ake keru*) which a warrior wears in full dress are obtained from Kalyo-Kengyu villages to the north-east, and are entirely unlike those made by the Semas and Lhotas. They are about six inches long, of red cane with an interwoven pattern in natural cane, and slit half-way down so that they can be easily slipped on and laced in to fit close to the wrist. Brass armlets (*sateru*) can be worn by anyone, but ivory armlets (*arukha*), which are uncommon, can only be worn by a man who has taken a head, with the curious exception that even if he has not shown his valour in this way a man may wear them if he has done so from boyhood. The reason for this curious relaxation must be that these ornaments are too valuable to discard, and a son would not willingly give up a pair inherited from his father. Those I have seen are very thin, as were all ivory armlets when ivory was very scarce and the hills had not been opened up to allow supplies to come in by trade. The only tail (*ashe khu*) I have seen worn is of the straight Sema pattern. If a man has taken one head he wears one baldrick (*arori*), and two if he has taken more than one head. The baldrick is very broad, and is of white cotton ornamented with a lozenge pattern in red and blue. I have never seen one with a hair fringe. The tail is invariably worn over the right hip, and never at the back, as in other tribes. If two baldricks are worn, the one over the right shoulder is not attached to the tail at all, but to the "dao" belt over the left hip.<sup>1</sup> A warrior in full dress wears an apron (*ashle*). This also comes from the north-east, and is identical with the full-dress apron worn by the Changs, who obtained their pattern from the same source. It is not just a sheet of cowries, as is the Sema apron, but is

<sup>1</sup> The Konyaks, who still carry the old horn tail, also wear an ornament on the hip which resembles a tail, but serves no practical purpose at all. This may have originated from the wearing of a decorated and somewhat impracticable tail on the hip.

a flap of cloth some ten inches long and five inches broad, with a line of cowries down the centre and small circles down each side. In the middle is hung a brass disc (*achi*) six inches in diameter, with a boss in the middle pierced to take a tuft of red hair. The wearing of these discs is very characteristic of the tribes to the east of our frontier. I have never seen a new one, and am doubtful whether they are still made. The apron is suspended from the narrow cotton belt (*sekhulu*) to which the wooden "dao" holder is attached. Finally, the leggings (*achi keru*) are of the close-fitting type made by the Kalyo-Kengyu and worn by them and the Changs. They are about eleven inches long, and slit to half-way up on the inside to admit the foot. The top half is red cane with a light zigzag pattern in natural cane, and the lower half is natural cane. The work is very fine, and the result amazingly soft and pliable. In Lephor men occasionally wear cane rings (*areso*), either of natural colour or dyed black, below the knee. They say the custom was adopted from the Tangkhuls, but is dying out. Only a few rings are worn at a time.<sup>1</sup>

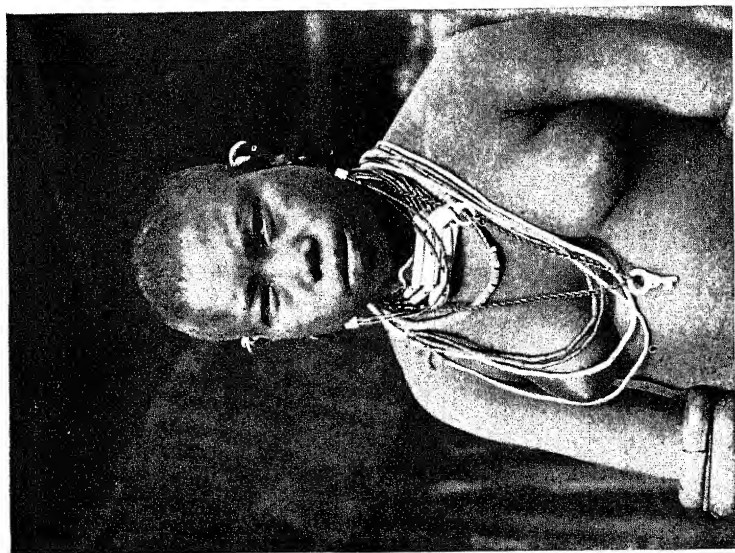
Compared with the men the women are but little adorned. Beads (*tu*, A, *ayong*, B, *arho*, C) are worn round the neck, Eastern Rengma women being particularly fond of a disc of conch-shell (*akhokhyu* or *asakru*) on the breast. Most rich Western Rengma women own big necklaces (*turho*, A, *ayonghe*, B) of Angami pattern, but they are not often worn except at festivals and at harvest, when fine clothes and ornaments must be worn to win the favour of the spirits of the crops. From each side of the neck fall ten or a dozen strings of carnelian beads (*tuzi*, A, *anyamphuyi*, B) with a conch-shell bead (*tuchong*, A, *samadi*, B) at the top and bottom of each string. Spacers (*tucha*, A, *ayong kechechong*, B) of cow bone, ornamented with a simple incised pattern, keep the strings apart and make them lie flat. At the bottom, and joining the two lots of carnelian beads, are sixteen to twenty strings of small "deo moni" (*tutsera*, A,

<sup>1</sup> The Western Angamis often wear an enormous number of cane rings below the knee. They say they are a great protection in case of a fall on rocky ground.

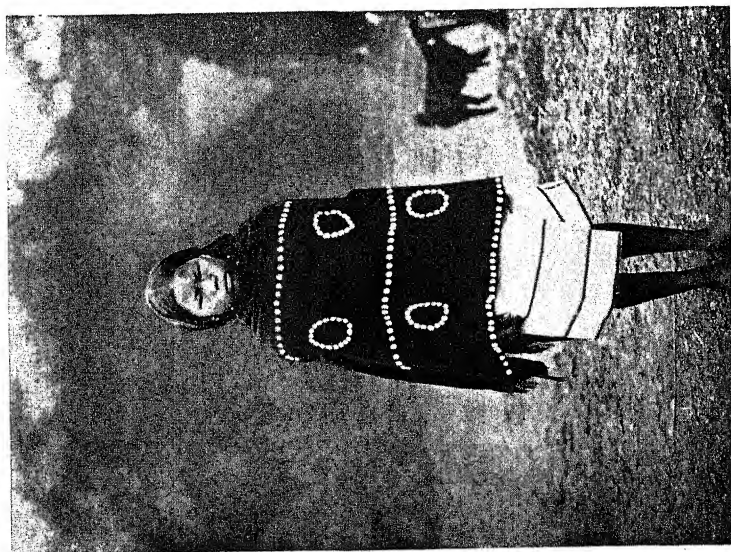
*aruwang*, B), also held in position by a spacer. Dark blue beads are usually strung next to the white spacers and conch-shell beads to show them up. Two flat conch-shells (*tughotung*, A, *chekhetung*, B) lie on each side of the neck, and a big conch-shell (*mechung*, A, *ashanu*, B) at the back, with a wooden peg inside it to push it out and display it well. An Eastern Rengma woman's best necklace is a long double string (*kuchypu*) of conch-shell beads reaching to the waist. Eastern Rengma women do not pierce the helix of the ear, but Western Rengma girls who are rich enough to wear cowrie-embroidered cloths do, wearing there a small tuft of cotton wool. In theory this hole is meant to take a single valuable bead later in life, but in fact this is very rarely worn. In the lobe of the ear small bead and feather ornaments are worn. Western Rengma women when young often wear a loop of beads reaching from the lobe of one ear round the back of the neck to the lobe of the other ear. This is called *tuchongyi* (A) or *alatangi* <sup>1</sup> (B). Another ornament is a string of beads hanging from the lobe of each ear with a white disc at the end called *nyeshe* (A) or *asungkhu* (B). This is not put on till a few months before marriage. In Eastern Rengma villages a girl wears till marriage, when it is discarded, a white bone disc (*anasu*), for which a white button is often substituted nowadays, hung from each lobe. After marriage a small cylinder of white pith (*achesu*) is worn in the hole in the lobe of the ear instead. Women, like men, wear two or three small brass rings through a hole at the edge of the helix. Women of the southern group of Western Rengmas used to wear hanging from their ears small brass discs (*semvu*), about two inches in diameter, decorated with incised concentric circles. What is probably the only surviving pair is preserved in Tseminyu, but rough bamboo models always form part of the ornaments put under the bed at Feasts of Merit <sup>2</sup>. White metal armlets (*ghi*, A, *akhwe*, B, *akhi*, C) are worn above the elbow. Bracelets (*ping*, A, *akhwesa*, B, *akhisa*, C) of the same metal are also worn.

<sup>1</sup> Once the string of these beads breaks after marriage they must be discarded. They cannot be restrung.

<sup>2</sup> See p 183



UNMARRIED DAUGHTER OF RICH WESTERN RENGMA,  
SHOWING CROPPED HAIR AND COTTON WOOL IN HELIX



YOUNG MARRIED WOMAN WEARING *KUABO* CLOTH :  
WESTERN RENGMA

[To face page 34.



By far the most interesting woman's ornament is the string of ancient beads which a well-to-do Western Rengma girl wears round her waist over her inner skirt and inside her outer <sup>1</sup> The beads are called *khongpsu* (A) or *atsongko* (B), and are cylindrical, highly polished, with a slightly pitted surface, and yellowish green in colour Only a limited number of strings are in existence, and there is no means of replenishing the supply Various stories are told of their origin Some say they used to be dug up on the site of the original Rengma village on Therugu Hill Another belief is that they were, and could be now, washed from the gravel of the Khongri stream The trouble is that no one knows where this stream is <sup>1</sup> It is supposed to be one of the many jungle streams near Tsoginyu, the village of the great hero Vyembı <sup>2</sup> This site, which is near the recent Sema colony of Rangazumi, some thirteen miles north-west of Therugu, was abandoned long ago, and with the inhabitants departed the secret of the River of Beads A string of these beads is usually priced at one cow, and is of a standard length This is measured as follows The string is put round the back of the head and pulled forward in line with the forehead There must be the distance of a span from thumb to little finger between the forehead and the front extremity of the extended beads Every girl aspires to own one string, or even two, in which case she will wear the second string as a necklace No one who does not possess a string may wear cotton wool in her ears or a cloth ornamented with cowries It would be "great shame" if she did. The beads descend from mother to daughter, and if a girl brings a string with her as dowry, her marriage price is accordingly higher <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p 23 These are the beads which the Eastern Rengmas call *amwu*, and which the men occasionally wear as necklaces

<sup>2</sup> See p 7

<sup>3</sup> Mr Lucas of Cairo and Mr Beck, the acknowledged English expert on ancient beads, have kindly examined both some of these green beads and some of the reddish ones worn by men They report they are of glass, imperfectly fused and of a peculiar kind, very similar to Saxon glass The red beads are coloured with cuprous oxide and the yellow with ferric oxide Ancient glass beads, which seem to be very similar, are also found in South Sumatra There, too, they are searched for in river-beds (Van der Hoop, *Megalithic Remains in South Sumatra*, pp. 133, 139)

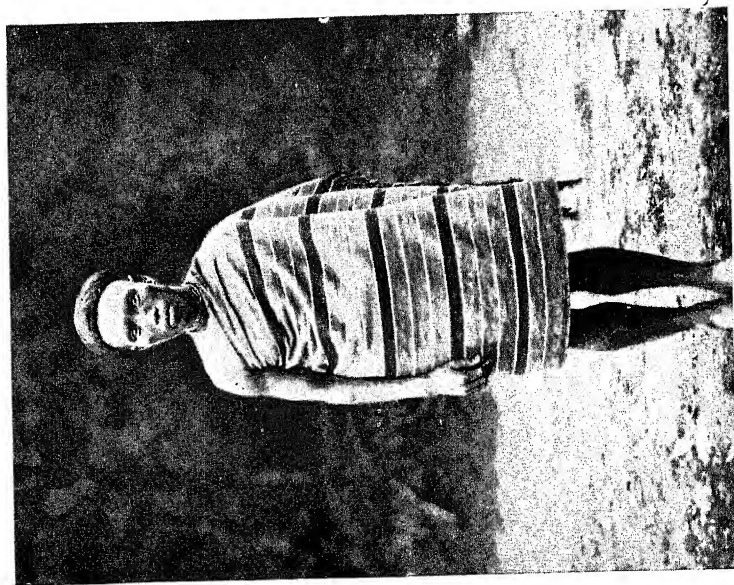
A string of these beads is the only garment in childhood, and may once have been so throughout life. This theory is supported by the Eastern Rengma custom of wearing similar strings of dark blue beads (*atsupri*) round the waist outside the only skirt. This string is expanded in the case of women whose husbands have given the full series of Feasts of Merit into a broad girdle falling over the hips, as one might expect if it were once the only covering of an elderly woman. In shape this girdle (also called *atsupri*) resembles that of Sema women<sup>1</sup> and is similarly worn over the skirt. A girdle of like shape is also found in the Southern Konyak villages, where the skirt plays a very minor part.

The wife of a man who has given the feast called *Akezu keza*, in addition to the *atsupri* belt, wears round her waist a string of cowries called *akezu kerithu*.

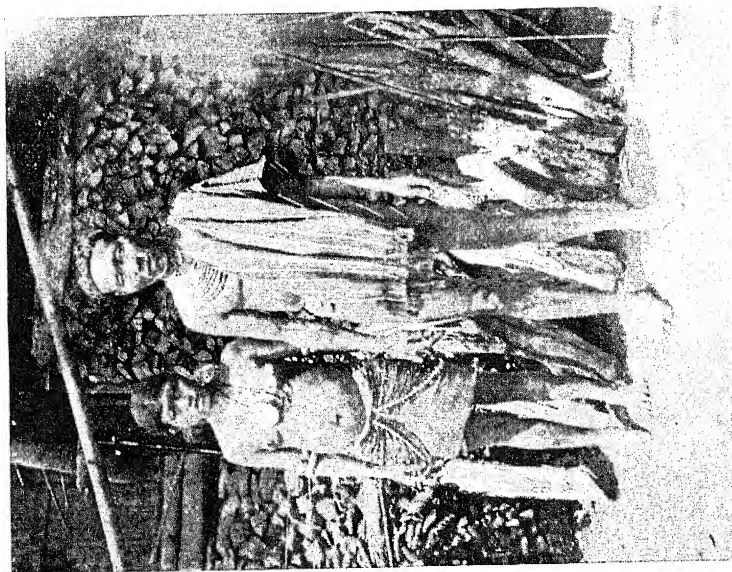
### *Weapons*

The offensive weapons of the Rengmas are the same as those of all other Naga tribes—namely, the “dao” (*nze*, A, *anu*, B, *anyu*, C), the spear (*mi*, A, *apui*, B, *apfe*, C), and the crossbow (*tholevu*, A, *ala*, B, *tsokrela*, C). In the old days fighting-clubs (*thung*, A, *atazu*, B), heavy pieces of wood about thirty inches long, were used by Western Rengmas both to ward off “dao” blows and to crack the enemy’s skull if possible. The Eastern Rengmas have no knowledge of the weapon, and I rescued from inevitable destruction in Tesophenyu and sent to the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford what was probably the last specimen owned by the Western Rengmas. All Nagas have a vague memory of a time when iron was unobtainable, and in those old days the war-club must have been their chief weapon. With that instinct that prompts man to continue to use for ceremonial purposes articles which are otherwise obsolete, the Zemi Nagas still make three small model clubs when taking the omens for war. These are hung from three strings over an egg, in which, after proper incantations, the results of the raid can be foreseen. This was done as recently as March 1932, when under the instigation of the sorceress

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Sema Nagas*, p. 17



MAN WEARING *AMI TSU* CLOTH : EASTERN RENGMA



RICH MAN AND WIFE, EASTERN RENGMA

He is wearing an *azokha* necklace and she an *at-supri* girdle.

[To face page 36.]





Gaidihu the village of Hangrum made an attack on a post of the 3rd Assam Rifles, with results disastrous to themselves

The "dao" is the constant companion of the Naga. Without it he could not fell jungle to sow his crops, build his house, cut up animals for meat or deal with his enemies, human and animal. That of the Western Rengmas is of the Lhota type <sup>1</sup> and large numbers are made in Tseminyu. Though they buy a few "daos" from the Angamis <sup>2</sup> the Eastern Rengmas still ordinarily use either the old-fashioned axe-shaped "dao" (*tsuchenyu*) or the long all-metal "dao" (*Mezür anyu kesuwa*—"long Sema dao"). Both these are obtained from the tribes to the north and east of them. Though the Western Rengmas no longer use the axe-shaped "dao," they remember the days when they did so, and call it *Kharo nze* (A) or *Kharo 'nu* (B). They relate that the first example was obtained from Semas by a man called Kharo. Later a brisk barter was carried on, the Semas, who could not weave, receiving cloths in exchange for "daos" which the Rengmas could not otherwise obtain. It is of this "dao," long obsolete among them, that the Aos prize old specimens so highly <sup>3</sup>. The Western Rengmas know also of the all-metal "dao," and call it *nze ketong*—"long dao"—(A), or *Mire 'nu*—"Chang dao"—(B), but do not seem ever to have used it <sup>4</sup>. The Rengmas seem to have no ancestral "daos," such as the Lhotas set such store by. <sup>5</sup> The "dao" is carried over the buttocks in a holder (*nze yongku*, A, *alechü*, B, *asekhi*, C), which is suspended round the waist by a narrow cotton belt (*yongkurü*, A, *alechuli*, B, *sekhü*, C). The Western Rengma holder, like that of the Lhotas, Semas and Aos, is a block of wood with a slit through it. Neither of the Eastern Rengmas' types of "dao" could be comfortably carried in this way. Their holder is a thin block of close-grained wood some nine inches long by six inches broad. A portion of sufficient breadth

<sup>1</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 15

<sup>2</sup> They call the Angami "daos" *Saha 'nyu*—"Sahibs' daos"—because they could not obtain them till Government brought peace and opened up trade.

<sup>3</sup> See *Ao Nagas*, p. 60

<sup>4</sup> See illustration of *anlaghi* facing p. 22 of *Sema Nagas*

<sup>5</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 16

and width to take the blade of the "dao" is cut away from the top three-quarters of the block, and thin bamboo slats or small plates of bone cut from buffaloes' ribs are fixed across from edge to edge to hold the weapon loosely in place. A small whetstone is often hung on the side of the carrier.

The wood of the sago palm (*Caryota urens*) is one of the hardest known to Nagas, and is much valued for making into spear-shafts. Indeed, tradition still remembers the days when iron was so scarce and valuable that sharpened sticks of this wood had to serve as spears for all except the rich. And very effective they are said to have been. Nowadays, however, the Tseminyu smiths are among the most expert spear-makers in the hills, and their products are traded over a very large area. The blade is about twenty-two inches long, leaf-shaped, with a cross-piece two-thirds down, a short way below which it broadens out into a socket about fifteen inches long to take the shaft.<sup>1</sup> At the bottom of the shaft is an iron butt twelve inches long. The Western Rengmas own a number of specially large blades of this type. They are never hafted and, being used only for marriage prices, are called *them mi*—"wife's spear"—A, or *apur men*—"spear price"—B.<sup>2</sup> A very popular spear is a type with a very thin, beautifully made, leaf-shaped blade, obtained from the Kalyo-Kengyu villages on the slopes of Saramatti. Naturally the Eastern Rengmas, who call it *satapfe*, obtain supplies more readily, but the Western Rengmas get it through the Semas,<sup>3</sup> and call it *teso mi* (A), or *keshangsha'pur* (B), the latter name meaning "spare spear," for a raider going out armed with two spears used to keep one of this type to the last for use in an emergency. A third type of spear, unknown to the Eastern Rengmas, has from one to three long, upward-curving barbs on each side. These can only be carried by slayers of men or tigers, and are called *mi sanasü* (A) or *akwohang kehasi 'pur*—"disembowelling spear"—(B).<sup>4</sup> In spite of the name, they

<sup>1</sup> See illustration facing p. 20 of *Sema Nagas*.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 207.

<sup>3</sup> A rather short-bladed specimen is shown as No. 1 in the illustration facing p. 20 of *Sema Nagas*.

<sup>4</sup> See the illustration facing p. 34 of *Angami Nagas* for a spear of this type with an exceptional number of barbs.

are so heavy and clumsy that I doubt if they were ever used in war. They might have been used for thrusting when defending a village, but never for throwing.<sup>1</sup> Of decorated shafts there are two types. One (*zu whe*—"fringed shaft") (A), *Sangpi kehang*—"Lungthang binding" (B), *ashe 'pfe* or *arru the*—"fringed shaft" (C) is bound with red goat's hair from the top to three-quarters down the shaft, save for a space left in the middle for the hand. At the bottom of the binding is a deep fringe of red hair. The name "Lungthang binding" was given to this pattern because the first one ever seen by the Western Rengmas was got from a Lungthang man who was killed on a raid. They now obtain them from Natsimi. These spears are more squat in appearance and have a shorter fringe than those used by the Eastern Rengmas, who obtain theirs from the north-east.<sup>2</sup> On the other type of spear the red binding extends only some twelve inches from the top of the shaft. The names (*Nzong zu ketye*—"Rengma wound shaft"—A, *Moza kepem*—"Tsemnyu made"—B, and *Lozaru the*—"Lazare's shaft"—C) indicate where these spears are made or obtained.<sup>4</sup> An Eastern Rengma may only carry a decorated spear if he has taken a head or helped to burn a hostile village. Any Western Rengma who can afford one can carry one, but a man who has got first or second spear at a tiger hunt is entitled to have five narrow black rings on the binding of his shaft. Other spears get one black ring. An obsolete type of spear (*khunahe*, A and B) used to exist in Western Rengma villages. Of this the large, leaf-shaped blade is very thin, and nine inches long by four inches broad. The only known specimen belongs to a man in Thegwepegedenyu, who believes that if he parted with it his line would die out.

The crossbow is almost obsolete, and has become little

<sup>1</sup> Certainly enormous spears are flourished by Naga defenders. I have one from the Zemi village of Pelekma the blade of which measures no less than forty inches in length and three and a half inches across at the broadest part. The mere flashing of this colossal weapon is said to have turned back a party of raiders on a famous occasion.

<sup>2</sup> See illustration facing p. 34 of *Angami Nagas*. No. 8 is the Natsimi type and No. 7 the north-eastern type.

<sup>3</sup> Lazare is a Southern Sangtam village north of Meluri.

<sup>4</sup> A shaft of this type is shown as No. 10 in the illustration referred to in the footnote above.

more than a toy. It was never much used in war, and now an occasional monkey is all that ever falls to it. It exactly resembles the pattern used by other Naga tribes<sup>1</sup>. The arrows (*tho*, A, *alachu*, B, *atsokre*, C) are of bamboo, with the tips hardened by burning. They are feathered with small pieces of bamboo spathe. The Eastern Rengmas occasionally use arrows with barbed iron tips. Some of these they make themselves, but they prefer those made at the Sangtam villages of Akhegwo and Yisi. The use of poison is unknown. It is noticeable that the words for "arrow" and "panji" (*tho*, A, *akhosü*, B and C) are the same in the Tsemnyu language, doubtless because they are both merely sharpened bamboo spikes. In the old days of war, the Rengmas, like other Naga tribes, stuck "panjis" thickly in the ground all round their villages to make the approach of enemies more difficult, and when themselves retreating after a raid planted them in their path as they went in order to hamper the pursuit.

The chief defence of the Rengma is his shield (*gi*, A, *atsonghe*, B, *achohu*, C). That of the Western Rengmas is of buffalo hide, and is about four and a half feet long, two feet broad at the top and one and a half feet broad at the bottom. Bamboo wicker-work shields are also used. The Eastern Rengma shield is of wicker work and very long and narrow, being about forty-five inches long, fourteen inches broad at the top, and ten inches broad at the bottom. The dancing-shield of a warrior of this section of the tribe is decorated all over with tufts of red hair. A long strip of bearskin runs down the middle, enlarging into a circle at the top, with eyes, nose and mouth cut out to represent the head of an enemy. One hornbill feather for each head taken is stuck in the face of the shield—the only use to which hornbill feathers are ever put by Eastern Rengmas, who, unlike most tribes, never wear them on the head<sup>2</sup>.

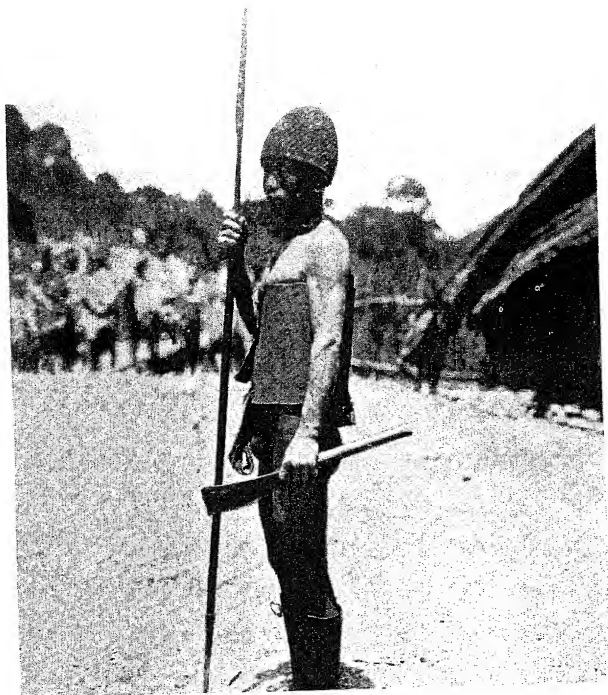
Particularly interesting is the rawhide body armour which used to be worn by the Western Rengmas. Probably

<sup>1</sup> See *Sema Nagas*, pp 21 sq, and illustration facing p 24. Dr Hutton is mistaken in his footnote to p xxvii of *Lhota Nagas*. Both Aos and Rengmas have the crossbow, though they rarely use it.

<sup>2</sup> Angamis who had taken heads also used to put hornbill feathers on their shields (A. J. M. Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, p cxlii).



[To face page 41.]



MAN WEARING OBSOLETE HIDE ARMOUR : WESTERN  
RENGMA



MAN WEARING OBSOLETE HELMET : WESTERN RENGMA

the use of such armour was once common in this area,<sup>1</sup> but for some reason it has become obsolete nowadays as a practical article of defence, and only survives as ornaments in the red cane hats, leggings and wristlets, and the broad cowrie belts of the Changs and other eastern tribes. Though the Eastern Rengmas wear the ornamental leggings and wristlets in full dress, they have no memory of the armour. A full set consists of a helmet (*perung*, A, *ayn whang*—"head cover"—B), a broad piece of hide (*gung kheking*, A, *apfu khekong*—"stomach coverer"—B) laced round the body and covering the abdomen and lower chest, a pair of arm-guards (*beng kheking*, A, *akwang khekong*—"forearm coverers"—B) of hide covering the forearms from the wrist up, and greaves (no name, A, *amezong khekong*—"leg coverers"—B) extending from the ankle to the middle of the calf. The helmet was made of the skin of a bull's hump, and old ones are often to be seen hanging up in houses. Village fires, rats, dogs and mischievous children have, however, destroyed all but one of the sets of body-armour.

Women carry no weapons, unless the long, thin iron staff (*meriketsu*) used by well-to-do Eastern Rengma women can be so called.<sup>2</sup> Certainly a jab from one would be very unpleasant. The Western Rengmas call them *songratong* (A), or *ayitsu aketsu* (B). Their smiths make them for sale, but they do not use them.

### *Character*

At this point in the monograph a paragraph on the character of the tribe is supposed to find a place. No part of the book is more difficult to write, for I know so many individuals, all differing one from the other, that it is hard to say that this or that trait is typical of the race. Rengmas are full of contradictions. They are dour and yet often wildly excited, bitter haters and firm friends, brave and yet liable to panic, sometimes sexually strict and sometimes loose. Rengmas do not readily make friends with strangers, but when they have done so the friendship lasts. To the

<sup>1</sup> Dr Hutton obtained a Thado Kuki set and sent it to the Pitt-Rivers Museum. The Konyaks are known to have used it in the past, though no set is to be found now.

<sup>2</sup> A staff of this type is numbered 13 in the illustration facing p. 34 of *Angami Nagas*.



official who has to deal with their disputes the most striking characteristic of the Western Rengmas is the noise and excitement to which the smallest squabble gives rise. Each side, backed by all friends and relations, tries to shout the other down, no one making the slightest effort to hear what anyone else has to say. A man, even if he is obviously in the wrong, will jump and shriek and argue for hours, and flatly refuse to come to any settlement. I have seen men so excited in quarrels as to be quite literally mad for the time being. Only when voices are dulled with hoarseness can the elderly men make themselves heard. Even so a settlement is often not brought about without reference to an official, no one in any village having any real authority. These remarks do not apply to the Eastern Rengmas. They are far from Kohima, and it is very rarely that cases are brought to the Deputy Commissioner. They are so recently administered that the microbe of litigation has not yet infected them, and disputes are settled in the villages, though doubtless not without a good deal of shouting.

Fierce though the quarrels are between individuals, they are nothing to those between villages. The hatred of Tseminyu and Tesophenyu for each other, for instance, is literally undying. In quarrels between them neither will admit that the other has the slightest right on its side. The very sight of a Tseminyu man irritates a Tesophenyu man, and vice versa, and for some years there have been orders forbidding men from one village to visit the other, so great is the danger of an unprovoked attack on a small party.

Men who will face elephant and tiger as Rengmas do,<sup>1</sup> and who in the past have raided boldly to get heads, are no cowards. Their staunchness, too, was proved in France, where men who had volunteered to face the utterly unknown served well in the Labour Corps. Yet they often give way to panic. They were no more ready than any other Nagas to fight to the death in their own wars, and I have seen a village reduced to a state of absolute terror by one foul-mouthed woman who claimed magic powers.

The standard of sexual morality varies in a most curious

<sup>1</sup> See p. 95

way from village to village. Among the Eastern Rengmas it is fairly high after marriage, though I have been shown with pride the emblems of successful intrigues on the funeral monument of a local Casanova. Before marriage, however, girls habitually admit lovers to their sleeping-platforms. This is not tabu, though the girl's parents demand a fine if they find out. Indeed, it is considered the natural and sporting thing to do for a boy to take the risk and spend the night with his girl. Curiously enough, no case seems to be known of a girl becoming pregnant through one of these intrigues. The Eastern Rengmas hold that even between adults one sexual act cannot cause pregnancy,<sup>1</sup> while between the young so many would be required that there would not be time for them before marriage! Both among the Eastern and Western Rengmas the vice of prostitution for gain is absolutely unknown, but in the latter group sexual morality, though strict in some villages, is very lax in others. Everywhere laxity is at its height during the season of sowing. The reason given is that more liquor is drunk then, but it is more probably true that there is an almost unconscious belief that the union of the sexes will in some way make the fields fertile.<sup>2</sup> The strictest villages among the Western Rengmas are those of the southern group. In some of these it is rare for a girl to have a lover even before marriage, and a fine is exacted for fornication. This used to be one cow and two spears, and is now Rs 16. With this meat is bought, which must be entirely consumed outside the village by the very poorest people, the village being "genna" for that day. Though girls do not have lovers in these villages, they have their admirers, as is only natural. A girl calls her admirer *logwa ponyu*, and he calls her *logwa lenyu*. These terms mean only "companion when going to the fields," but they denote that, even if the girl does not allow the man every privilege, she allows him some that prudes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Hutton, *Sema Nagas*, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> The Konyak village of Wakching provides the best example I know of the belief that the sexual act is beneficial to the food supply. There rich men arrange for young men to screen off little sleeping-places on the verandahs of their granaries and bring girls there for the night. The arrangement is with individuals, and any young man who so desires will have a granary verandah allotted to him for the purpose.

might frown at In the northern group the corresponding terms are *azipuzya* and *azwata*. These have the same literal meaning, but a very different implication. In some villages the unmarried men, not content with spending the early part of the night with their loves, are now even beginning to sleep all night on the girls' platforms,<sup>1</sup> a practice which is, strictly speaking, tabu. Relations after marriage vary as they do before. There are definite signs of an old custom by which a married woman, provided she agreed, was at the disposal of all the clansmen of her husband. Probably nowhere would a man attempt to punish a brother or near relation for adultery with his wife, but in the northern group the privilege is more widely exercised, and to demand a fine from anyone of the clan for this offence would be regarded, possibly, as understandable, but certainly indicative of personal dislike, and I have never heard of any fine being paid.<sup>2</sup>

The Rengmas live in the past and the present, and share with all other Naga tribes an absolute inability to foresee the future. For so long has each generation lived as its fathers did that the tribe seems unable to grasp change. A tendency is never noticed and provided for, a change comes as a shock and surprise when it is too late. For instance, the older men hate and abominate the changes being rapidly wrought by the American Baptist Mission, but they never made any attempt rightly or wrongly to counter the new teaching, and can now only impotently bemoan it. Failure to foresee implies failure to adjust, and herein lies the tragedy for the Rengmas of this changing age. New culture must inevitably impinge on them, and that it should destroy them is painful to those who love them. For lovable they are, for all their faults. They are cheerful and the best of friends to those they like, and so highly strung and sensitive that a quick word over-night will bring tears of remorse in the morning.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Lhota Nagas*, p. 101. The Lhotas similarly condone adultery by a fellow clansman. In one case I knew a man habitually and openly committed adultery with his sister-in-law, but the aggrieved husband flatly refused to demand a fine. Instead he gave his wife to his brother and married another.

## PART II

### DOMESTIC LIFE

#### *The Village and its Defences*

THE last village founded by Rengmas in the Naga Hills was Nishinyu, and that was by Western Rengmas seven generations ago. The Eastern Rengmas have entirely forgotten the appropriate ceremonies, and the Western Rengmas remember them only as a tradition handed down by old men. Two essentials were required—the site had to be easily defensible, and it had to have on it a tree suitable for use as a head-tree. Such a site having been found, a party of men of more than one clan, carrying shields, proceeded to it with a dog to drive away evil spirits, a cock and a boar for sacrifice, and some water from the spring of the parent village. This water had to be stolen at night, for the old village would object, lest “virtue” be taken with it.<sup>1</sup> On arrival at the site omens were taken with slips of wood after the Lhota manner<sup>2</sup> to decide which clan should provide the man to perform the foundation ceremony. The boar and cock were then sacrificed, a male sacrifice being essential, for a female sacrifice would bring weakness in war. At the sacrifice the man chosen to be founder pretends to see the village already established and populous and utters the following prophecy, “This is an auspicious place for sacrifice. Many men sacrifice here. There are many boys here. There are many girls here. Many children are playing with tops.<sup>3</sup> Many children are playing with sword-beans.<sup>4</sup> Many people are having a tug-of-war.”<sup>5</sup> He then offers ten pieces of meat to spirits on his right, nine pieces to spirits on his left, a portion for

<sup>1</sup> For a similar theft of water see *Lhota Nagas*, pp. 6, 126.

<sup>2</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 46.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 123.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 123.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 121.

tigers, that they may not harm the cattle, a portion to the spirit of wild animals, that it bring game, and a portion for domestic animals. As he offers the meat he calls down a blessing on the new village, and prays that countless men may live there and that they may sacrifice mithan, kill game, and bring home the heads of their enemies. This done, all fall to on the rest of the meat. The spot where the sacrifice took place is common ground for ever. The water from the old village is poured into the spring of the new village, and the men at once begin to clear the site and build houses. As soon as possible magic stones<sup>1</sup> are found and buried under the head-tree.

There are only twelve villages of the Western Rengmas, all, except Choshnyu, on spurs of Therugu Hill<sup>2</sup>. They fall into two language groups, which I have for convenience called the Tseminyu or Southern group and the Tesophenyu or Northern group, after the two biggest villages, though the latter is of mixed origin and contains some "khels"<sup>3</sup> that speak the one language and some that speak the other. In the Tseminyu group there are the following villages —

1. Tseminyu (257 houses),<sup>4</sup> called after Tsemi, the traditional founder

2. Nishinyu (8 houses), "the new village". This is the latest colony from Tseminyu. Tradition gives the following reason for its failure to increase. At a tug-of-war a man cut the creeper. This was tabu, and the people dwindled. A would-be benefactor thought they would increase if sexually stimulated, and with that end in view buried the organs of a male and female goat in the path. But all who stepped over them lost all sense of morality, and adultery became rampant. This led to so many quarrels that the already diminished village split up and parties went off to the other villages.

<sup>1</sup> See pp 231 sqq

<sup>2</sup> Just as the Aos (see *Ao Nagas*, p 4) divide their country up by ranges, so the Western Rengmas divide theirs into the Inner Hills (*Zuhr*, A, A'a, B), east of the Nro River, and the Outer Hills (*Zuchong*, A, *Achela*, B) west of that river. The latter now includes only Choshnyu in the Naga Hills District, but covers all the Mikir Hills Rengma villages.

<sup>3</sup> A "khel" is a division of a village. See p 55

<sup>4</sup> The strength of the villages is given as it stood in 1933

3 Sentenyu (55 houses), called after the founder, Senten

4 Therugunyu (89 houses), called after Therugu Hill

5 Thegwepegedenyu (74 houses), "the place where the bear's head was hung on the tree" An old man is said to have refused a present of a bear's head and to have hung it on a tree

6 Phesinyu (125 houses), "new village"

7 Tsokonkonyu (22 houses), "the village of rattling (*konkon*) stones (*tso*)," so called because part of the approach to it from the east is covered with loose slabs of stone which rattle when walked on Many of the village customs are of Angami origin

8 Choshinyu (27 houses), called after the founder Choshi The village has almost become Angami

In the Tesophenyu group there are —

1 Tesophenyu (377 houses), called, some say, after the *teso* bird, or, others say, after a large black ant also called *teso*

2 Kitagha (118 houses), a name of which no derivation is known

3 Kotsenyu (178 houses), a name of which no derivation is known

4 Kotsephesinyu or Kotsenishinyu (52 houses), "new Kotsenyu"

There are only three Eastern Rengma villages—Meluri (273 houses), Lephori (85 houses) and Sahunyu (41 houses), all on the hills bordering the lower Tizu The derivation of none of the names is known

An ideal site for a village is a flat-topped spur from which the ground falls away steeply at the sides No villages are now fortified, but in the old days a stranger approaching along the ridge would have had to pass under tall trees in which were little houses These were occupied by sentries, who kept a large stock of heavy stones to throw down on attackers Beyond the trees was a deep ditch, full of "panjis" <sup>1</sup> and crossed by a single plank quickly removable in times of danger Beyond that, in Western Rengma villages, was a heavy wooden gate ornamented with carved human heads and flanked by stone walls Along the sides

<sup>1</sup> See p. 40.

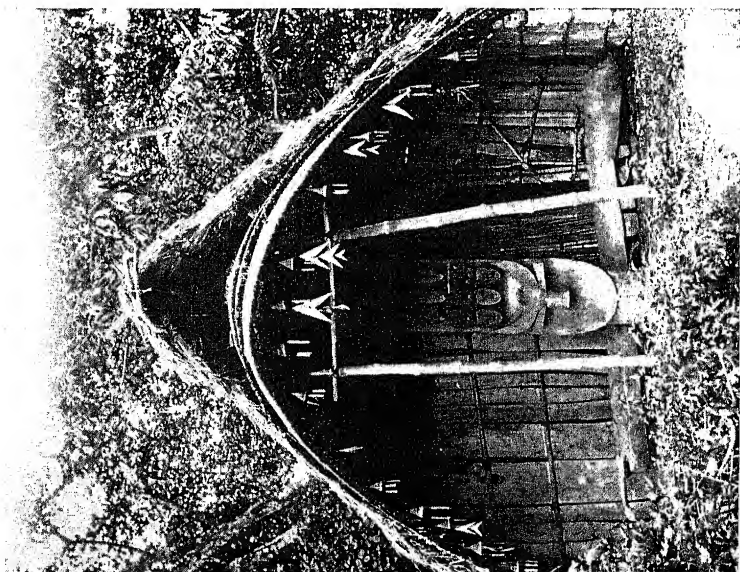
of the village, where the fall was steep, were grown dense hedges of a thorny creeper, and everywhere the ground was covered with "panjis" The thorny creeper still flourishes as of old, but the stone walls are falling in ruin, and not a single gate remains Tseminyu are talking of making one once more, to shut at great ceremonies, as it is believed that the leaving of the entrances open on such days has allowed evil influences to enter and bring bad luck to the village The Eastern Rengmas have never built stone walls, relying on bamboo palisading and timber stockades which can only be entered up a notched log

#### *Village Surroundings*

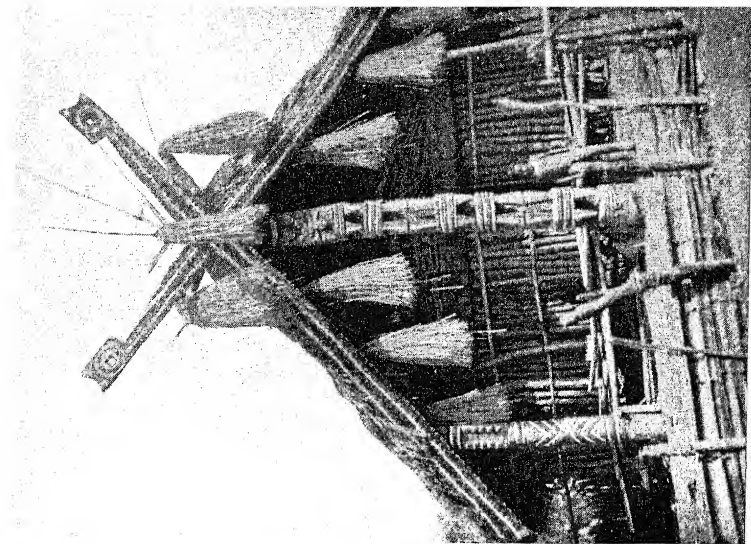
The paths up from the fields in the valleys are often shaded with oak trees to keep the afternoon sun off the workers toiling up the steep slopes after the day's work All round the village is a deep belt of trees carefully reserved for wood Every yard of it is privately owned, and in it are pollarded oaks and alders for firewood and a few walnuts and other straight-growing trees that are useful for posts and beams Within this belt is another one of scrub and low jungle, which serves as the village latrine, separate portions being allotted to men and women Pigs keep it clean, and there is never any objectionable smell Within it again are the granaries, so placed to escape the disaster of a village fire In Western Rengma villages there is usually scrub again between the granaries and the line of the village fence, the few insignificant gardens they have being immediately behind the houses The Eastern Rengmas, on the other hand, surround their villages, wherever the land is fairly level, with a broad belt of gardens containing garlic and a few vegetables, all carefully fenced to keep pigs out, with narrow paths left between the fences to give access to the granaries beyond Theirs are the only Naga villages I know that one approaches by paths twisting and turning at right angles, according as the garden plots lie, with a stout bamboo fence on either hand The gardens are not entered by gates, which a careless man might easily leave open to the ever-foraging pigs, but by stiles ingeniously







FRONT OF "MORUNG": WESTERN RENGMA



FRONT OF "MORUNG": EASTERN RENGMA

made by bending bamboos over the top of the fence and sticking their ends in the ground, a few cross bamboos serving as precarious steps

*The "Morung"*

It is an undoubted fact that among the Naga tribes that build "morungs" the state of those buildings in a village gives a sure indication of the state of the village itself. Decaying "morungs" mean a decaying village, and well-used, well-kept "morungs" a vigorous community. It is in the "morung" that the old men tell of the great deeds of the past, and the coming generation is taught to carry on the old traditions in the future. When the past is no longer gloried in and the future seems dark and uncertain, the "morungs" fall into decay. This is why in the two small, fever-stricken Eastern Rengma villages of Sahunyu and Lephori there are no "morungs," while the powerful village of Meluri builds fine ones. This, too, is why there are signs of neglect of the "morungs" in the Western Rengma villages. The conservatives sigh and vaguely blame the American Baptist Mission. The Mission, it is true, forbid Baptist boys to use the "morungs," on the ground that they are heathen institutions—meaning, it would seem, by "heathen" dating from before the days of Baptist propaganda. But there are still villages with no converts. What the Rengma who blames the Mission really means is that he sees an enormously powerful organisation, backed by what seem to him limitless funds, attacking his beliefs year after year without ceasing, and gradually winning converts and getting a footing in stronghold after stronghold of his faith. Resistance seems hopeless, and he feels that when he is dead his own children may reject and scoff at the traditions and customs he has taught them so carefully. A great depression comes over him, and effort seems hardly worth while.

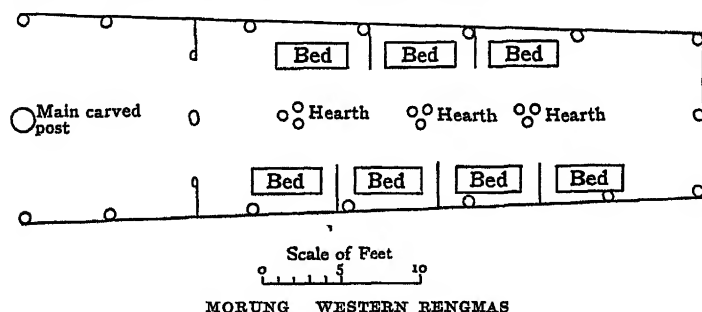
In forbidding their converts to use the "morung" and in undermining it as an institution the Mission are taking a very dangerous step, from which they would assuredly have shrunk if they had considered the psychological aspect of

the matter A boy goes to the "morung" when he is very small—as soon, that is to say, as he "feels shame" at sleeping in the same room as his parents It is in the "morung" that he fags for other boys and is taught his duties in life and generally hammered into shape This means that the "morung" tends to take the place of his father as a disciplinarian This is most important, for it is from a son's feelings towards his father as disciplinarian that one of the great stresses of the family complex arises <sup>1</sup> Looking back over the thousands of Naga disputes that have been brought before me in the course of my service, it certainly seems to me that violent quarrels between fathers and sons are more frequent in tribes which have no "morungs" In the Sema tribe they are disastrously common and, as the son grows up, a feeling of rivalry towards his father is very apt to develop Among the Angamis serious quarrels are not common, but a son is apt to resent any form of discipline, which, in truth, an Angami father rarely tries to exercise In the Ao tribe, where the "morungs" play an important part, quarrels between fathers and sons are rare

The "morungs" (*rensi*, A, *azughu*, B, *arwikhu*, C), of which each "khel" possesses one or, rarely, two, are the finest and most ornate buildings in a Rengma village Among the Western Rengmas a low, round roof is carried forward over the front porch, as in rich men's houses, and the porch itself is often supported on posts Under the eaves are hung little bunches of thin bamboo slats and pieces of bamboo spathe cut into a swallow-tail form that swing and tinkle pleasantly in the breeze. The centre post in front, and sometimes the two side posts, are elaborately carved At the bottom of the centre post there is a mithan's head in high relief, and above it carvings of human heads and conventionalised "tails" Behind this porch is a single room, used as a dormitory and sitting-place, with bamboo benches down the sides. An average size for a building would be 50 feet long by 12 feet broad. The huge grass tassels hanging from the eaves of an Eastern Rengma

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Malinowski, *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, pp. 42-44 and 83.

"morung" and the herring-bone pattern on the side posts remind one strongly of Konyak decoration. The buildings differ greatly in appearance from those of the Western Rengmas. They are broader than they are long, 20 feet broad by 15 feet long being an average measurement, and long, carved weather-boards are extended up over the porch till they cross like the "house horns" of Angami houses.<sup>1</sup> The carving on the centre post varies in different "morungs". A common *motif* is pairs of highly conventionalised hornbills facing one another, with a band of simple pattern dividing each group of pairs. Side-posts are not always carved. When they are the design is simple.



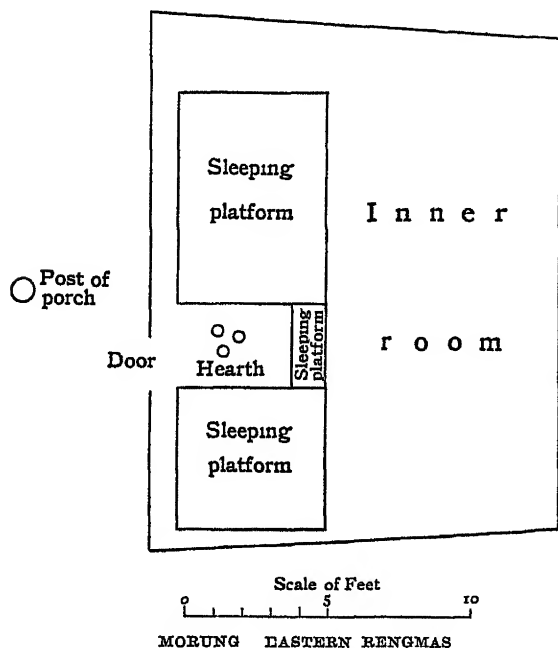
The "morung" fulfils a variety of functions. It is a club far more strictly preserved from feminine intrusion than any club in England—for were not waitresses admitted into many famous "houses" during the War? No case has ever been known of a woman entering a Rengma "morung". There the men sit and gossip and tell stories on "genna" days. The old men are primed with drink, and by their discourses keep alive the traditions of the village. In the old days warriors invariably kept their shields, spears and "daos" in the "morung," but now that there is no fear of sudden raids they are kept in the houses. A "morung" is also a sanctuary. No criminal, whether of that village or a fugitive from another, can be touched while in a "morung". Even did a man commit murder, the avengers, in the fury of the moment, cannot

<sup>1</sup> See *Angami Nagas*, illustration facing p 51

pursue him into a "morung" The men of the "khel" to which the "morung" belongs must protect him at all costs till the case against him has been discussed and calm action decided on Nor may any crime be committed in a "morung" Property can be left lying about in one with absolute safety, for to steal is tabu Any stranger, too, entering a "morung" must be treated politely, and can on no account be refused a night's shelter High words and abuse are forbidden But the most important function is that of a sleeping-place for the boys of the "khel" A boy enters the "morung" when he is six or seven years of age and sleeps there till he marries and sets up house on his own He can select any vacant sleeping-place he likes, and once he has taken it he cannot be turned out by any boy, however senior All small boys have to fetch and carry and "fag" for the older boys, but the son of a newcomer to the village must be treated with special consideration, and can never be abused or struck But among the boys of the village there is a certain amount of rough play, and a bumptious or obnoxious youngster is taught his place exactly as he is in an English Public School He may sit down in the dark and find stinging leaves have been put ready for him Or a more elaborate punishment may be inflicted which many a mother in England would not approve of for her darling. A plank is laid like a see-saw over a log. One end is weighted down with a wooden pillow The boy has to jump on the other end and the wooden pillow flies up and hits him on the back of the neck.

It is as shameful for girls as it is for boys to sleep with their parents when they reach years of understanding Corresponding to "morungs" for boys there are therefore dormitories for girls (*katsü nyü*, A, *aowekeye*, B, *ashu*, C), from the age of six or seven till they are married These are in the front rooms of one or two houses in each "khel" In the Tsemnyu group of the Western Rengmas and among the Eastern Rengmas the girls' sleeping-platform is high up under the roof To get up to it a girl climbs a notched log, and, once there, is safe from male importunities Even a

married woman may not climb on to one, and for a man to do so is absolutely tabu. Even the pounding-table below may not be used by lovers at night<sup>1</sup>. They must go elsewhere. In the Tesophenyu group, on the other hand, the girls' platform is conveniently near the ground, and admittedly young men are allowed to sit on it. Nothing is said as to how late at night they are allowed to stay, and rumour has it that they often sleep there. Certain it is



that the platforms are not strict sanctuaries for the chaste, and this is what one would expect from the curious contrast in sexual morality between the Southern and Northern villages of the Western Rengmas<sup>2</sup>.

There are no fixed periods at which "morungs" have to be rebuilt, it is done whenever the state of the building demands it. Naturally the demolition of a building which

<sup>1</sup> It is forbidden to commit the sexual act on a pounding-table in any house. To do so would cause the food supply to fail.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 43.

shelters the sacred stones<sup>1</sup> and which plays a part in so many ceremonies is fraught with spiritual danger. To special people the duty is therefore assigned of pulling off the first handfuls of thatch. In the Tseminyu group of the Western Rengmas it is the duty of the *Tegwo kebogu*,<sup>2</sup> who uses a long bamboo, being careful not to touch the thatch with his hands. In the Tesophenyu group it is done by two boys of the "morung," who must belong to different clans and all of whose parents must be alive. They may eat only meat on the morning of that day, and must sleep side by side in the repaired "morung" that night. If the main post is renewed in villages of the Tesophenyu group, the oldest man of the "khel" digs up and washes the sacred stones buried at its base and lays them aside in a place of safety. The ordinary ceremonies are done which take place at the periodic inspections of the stones,<sup>3</sup> and they are reburied when the new post is in position. Every household in the "khel," however poor, brings a small offering of meat, ginger, salt and rice beer, and lays it wrapped in leaves at the foot of the post, where it is left for pigs and dogs to eat. The day ends with a feast for which all preparations have been made beforehand. The old man and the two boys who began the demolition eat first, and then the general company of men and boys falls to. No women are allowed to be present, and the drinking and story-telling go on far into the night. In the Tseminyu group it is the *Tegwo kebogu* who moves and washes the sacred stones. He then has a further ceremony to perform. He lays out in front of the main post a row of leaves, and on each places a scrap of the meat prepared for the feast, calling out as he does so the name of some warrior in an enemy village and saying, "This is your portion. Eat it and die." The tribes are taken in order from the north—Lhotas, Rengmas, Semas and Angamis. The leaves are then tied up round the scraps of meat and all are put in a basket and hung up in the "morung." If rats eat the scraps soon it means that heads will be got. It is lucky, too, if hornets come to the offerings that day, enemies'

<sup>1</sup> See pp 231, 232<sup>2</sup> See p 141<sup>3</sup> See pp. 175, 178

heads will be brought to the village and much game will be killed. No special effort is made to get heads or game after a "morung" has been rebuilt. The Eastern Rengma ceremonies are far simpler. All who sleep in the "morung" make provision for a feast. The demolition can be begun by anyone. When the rebuilding is completed and it is time for the feast, the oldest man of the "khel" first sprinkles in front of the "morung" an offering of meat, rice and rice-beer for the spirits, and goes home without eating. Only unmarried boys share in the feast.

### *The Head-Tree*

The head-tree (*repe bing*—head-tree—A, *ayr kutigha tung*—head hanging tree—B) is a conspicuous object in Western Rengma villages, that at Kitagha being a particularly fine specimen. It is always a *figus*,<sup>1</sup> and under it are buried the sacred stones<sup>2</sup> of the village. In the old days the long bamboos from which enemies' heads were hung were placed against its branches. So sacred is it that no case has ever been known of anyone deliberately damaging it, and what punishment men or spirits would inflict for the sacrilege is therefore unknown. Should a rotten branch fall, the village must abstain from all work in the fields for a day and the women from spinning and weaving. If this "genna" were not observed, the men would fail to kill game and would become effeminate and weak.

There are no head-trees in Eastern Rengma villages.

### *Divisions of the Village*

Throughout the tribe every village is divided into "khels" (*kasung*, A, *avyengshi*, B, *aphru*, C), of which the boundaries on the ground are exactly known. The boundaries are not marked in any way, but it is known in what "khel" any given house stands. Often the "khels" are called after clans, such as the *Sampnyu kasung* in Tsemnyu or *Tepnyu*.

<sup>1</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 28, Parry, *Lakhers*, p. 63.      <sup>2</sup> See pp. 231-279.

<sup>3</sup> The word "khel" is an Assamese administrative term for a body of men, which has come to be used for a division of a village. The earliest English use is by A. J. M. Mills in 1854, who says, "The population [of Assam] was divided into Khells, numbering 1,000 to 5,000 able-bodied men of one caste or calling" (*Report on the Province of Assam*, p. 2).



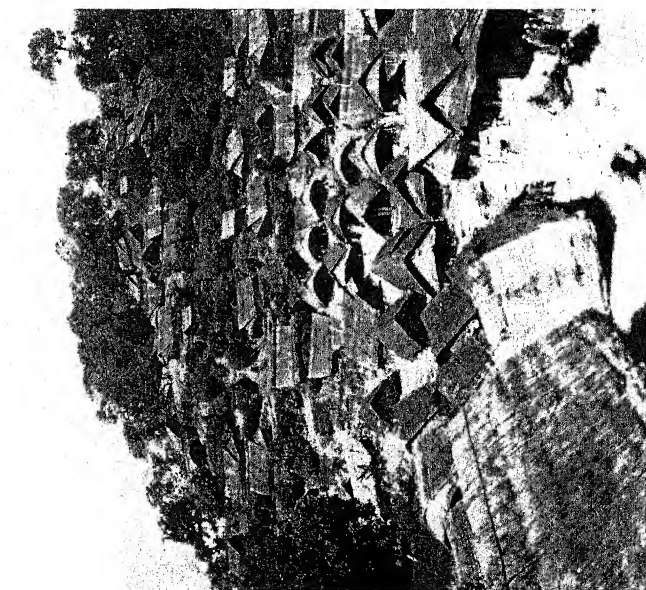
*anyengshi* in Tesophenyu Other "khels" are called after natural objects, such as the *Tsophanyu kasung* ("khel of the stone step") in Tseminyu or the *Inukha anyengshi* ("khel of the rocks") in Tesophenyu

A small village would have two or three "khels," Tseminyu has five, and Tesophenyu has no less than nine Among the Eastern Rengmas, Meluri has four "khels" and the other two villages three each One "morung" to each "khel" is the rule, but in Tseminyu there are two "khels" with two "morungs" each Very probably at one time it was the rule for a "khel" to be occupied exclusively by members of one clan This is not so now, but one clan usually predominates in a "khel," though there is no objection to members of other clans living there if they own house-sites There is a real bond between members of the same "khel," for save in rare instances they are all members of the same "morung," and in the past must thereby have been comrades in war This bond, real as it is, is not, however, as strong as that between members of the same clan, even if they live in different "khels" Fights between "khels" used to be very frequent Spears and the edges of "daos" were not used, but blows were freely given with the backs of "daos" and showers of stones were thrown All fighters carried shields.

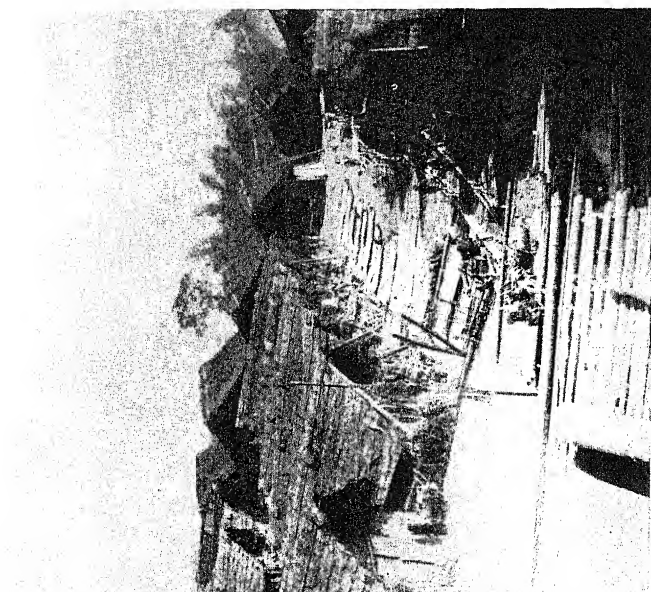
#### *The House and its Contents*

Houses in a Rengma village are built to face in any direction. Usually they are in lines, which are short in Western Rengma and prolonged into streets in Eastern Rengma villages Everything depends on the nature of the site, and a man merely builds a house in line with that of his next-door neighbour if he conveniently can They are pretty miserable hovels, dark, dirty and cramped Even the rich man does not spend his wealth on the local equivalent of bricks and mortar Warmth and just sufficient room for himself, his family and his belongings are all he wants Even if the progress he has made in the series of Feasts of Merit entitles him to embellishments they are external, and not internal The Eastern Rengmas, who are





A VIEW OF TESOPHENYU VILLAGE : WESTERN RENGMA



A VIEW OF MELURI VILLAGE : EASTERN RENGMA

[To face page 57.]

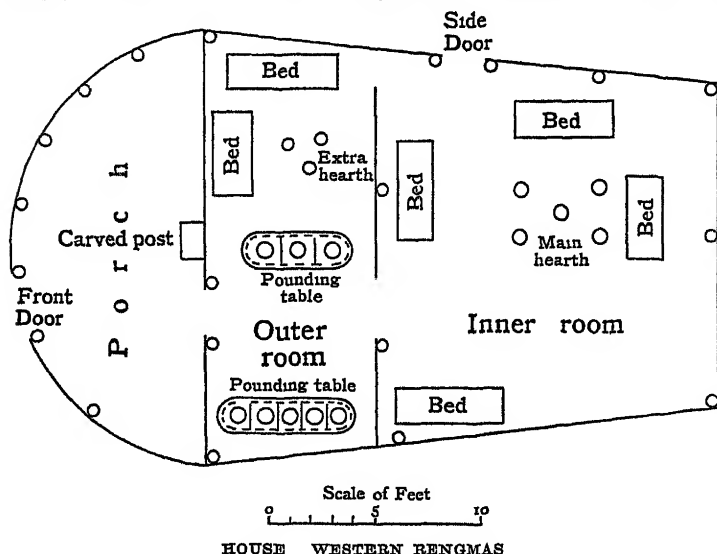
more given than the Western group to building in long lines, with the houses almost touching, make rough stone abutments to form level sites. This is rare in Western villages, where the houses are almost invariably built on sites dug level, or at most with the foundations at the back only built up with rough stone masonry.

Naturally the spot on which a man is to live must be freed as far as possible from evil influences. A man who is going to build a house therefore performs a simple ceremony, which varies somewhat in the different sections of the tribe. In the Southern group of the Western Rengmas no effort is made to discover by dreams whether the proposed site is lucky or unlucky, but on the day on which work is to be begun the builder goes to the site at dawn without speaking to anyone, and taking with him a stake, a shield and a *retso* leaf of the kind of rice-beer known in Assamese as "pita madhu" <sup>1</sup>. He sets up the stake on the site, ties the leaf of rice-beer to it, and leans the shield against it with the words "From to-day this is my house-site. Let all evil spirits depart." The stake must be incorporated in the house when built. In the Northern group dreams are sought for and regarded as important. The man takes a little earth from the site he has selected and puts it near his head when he goes to sleep. If a dream of ill omen follows, he will give up all idea of building on that site and look for another. Once a favourable dream has been granted him, he arranges a date on which all his friends and relations will come and help him with the actual building. On the morning of that day he goes to the site in silence at early dawn and buries some rice, a scrap of iron and a whetstone at the spot where the centre post will stand, saying as he does so "This is an ancestral site. I am committing no sin. I am buying the soil with these things." The idea of the burned offerings is that the rice will bring plenty, and the iron and stone, which never decay, long life. Finally he sets up a reed where the centre post will stand and ties to it a leaf-cup of "pita madhu." The work of building can then be begun. The Eastern Rengmas per-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 112

form no ceremony till the hearth-stones are put in position

The only materials used in building a house are wooden posts, bamboos and thatch <sup>1</sup> No nails are used, everything being tied in position with thongs of cane or bamboo A Western Rengma house is about 24 feet long, 20 feet broad in front, and 16 feet broad at the back Usually the only door (*khamukhehu*, A, *azukam*, B) is in front, but a few houses in the Northern group have back doors (*akhungsa khepi*) Back doors were originally intended to aid the



inmates in escaping when raiders got into a village, and in these days of peace the custom of making them is gradually dying out A side door (*khaphu pe*, A, *akhungsa khepi*, B) may be made by a man who has given the *Pesingnyu khungho* (A) or *Kekhe khamesho* (B) feast in the series of Feasts of Merit <sup>2</sup> The front door opens into an outer room

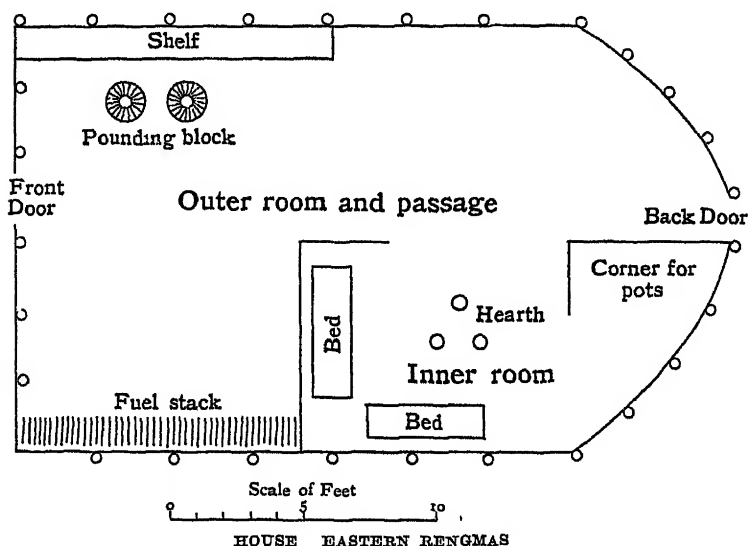
<sup>1</sup> Except in the separate Baptist "khel" of Tsemmyu the eye is spared the sight of the corrugated iron that makes so many Western Angami villages hideous Though the use of this foul material offends all the canons of good building, in that it reflects the light and is not native to the place, it was beloved of our forefathers (see Sibree, *Madagascar and its People*, p 35), and does not appear to offend the eye of Government Departments or Missions,

<sup>2</sup> See pp 183, 189.

(*khagūng*, A, *achakang*, B) in which are kept the pounding-table (*pembu*, A, *asām*, B), baskets, hoes and odds and ends of every kind. In cold villages, between this room and the main room (*thensur hu kenr*, A, *azanu*, B) a bamboo partition stretches half-way across the house. In hot villages the partition is often omitted to make the house more airy. Behind this partition is the bed (*nanu*, A, *aowe*, B), and near it, in the middle of the room, the hearth (*thensur*, A, *athrukha*, B). This is the main living-room, and is crowded with belongings. Over the fire is a bamboo rack on which are put spoons and cups that are continually in demand, salt and chillies that have to be kept dry, and many small things in constant use. Below the rack a few bits of meat are usually hanging in the smoke. On the floor of the room are little wooden seats for guests and a few wooden dishes that have been left lying about. Other dishes and spoons hang from pegs stuck into the bamboo walls (*chatho*, A, *akhachi*, B), in the interstices of which are crammed spindles, combs, bird-traps and other small objects. Clothes and baskets hang from cane loops everywhere. The plank bed and probably another bench as well are piled with old clothes, and in the corners are baskets containing the best clothes and the wife's store of thread. On the cross-beams overhead are baskets, big traps and other bulky things. Spears are stuck in the ground near the main post, and "daos" lie about or lean against the wall. It can be imagined that there is very little room left to move. To relieve the congestion, houses of the Northern group often have a little back room partitioned off called *tūkhu kāmma*. In this is kept all the liquor-making apparatus. In Southern villages there is no such room, and the vats and baskets stand against the back wall. Wherever anything may be, the housewife always seems able to put her hand on it at once, though the only light is that which comes through the door.

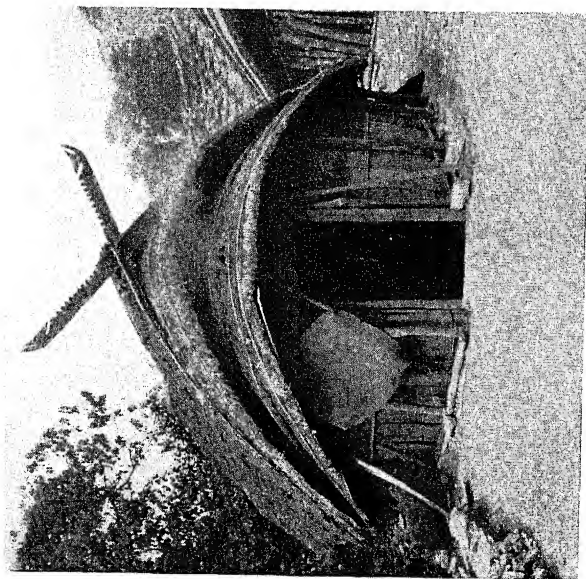
The Eastern Rengma house is slightly different in design, having a semicircular back in which there is always a back door (*zosola*), the days of raiding being too recent for the emergency exit to be abolished. A typical house would be

about 25 feet long and 17 feet broad. The floor is natural earth. In a poor man's house the front door (*arhoko*) opens into an outer room (*awipa*), which is partitioned off from the inner room (*azelo*). A third room is never made. In bigger houses, however, there is another partition running lengthways along the side of the *azelo*, and cutting off from it a passage (*atela*), leading straight from the front door to the back. In the outer room firewood is stacked against the wall on one side, and on the other are one or two rice-pounding blocks (*asola*). These differ entirely from the

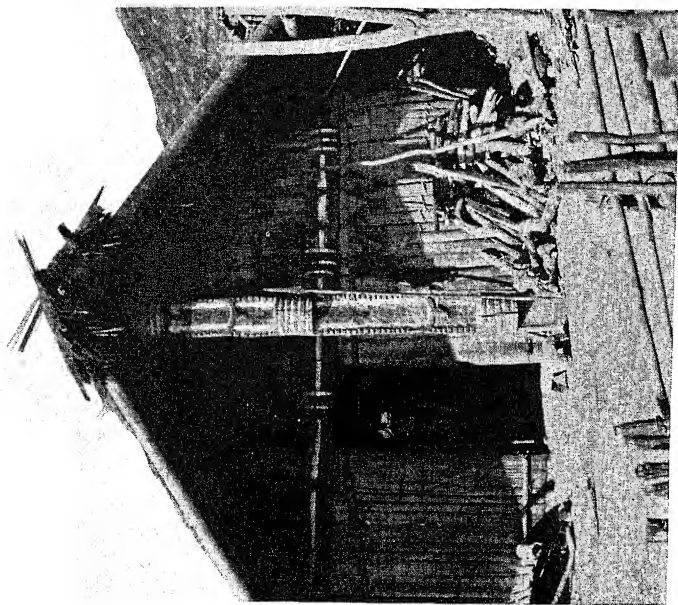


pounding-tables of the Western Rengmas, and are merely sections of tree-trunk with a hollow in the middle, into which the rice is poured to be pounded. They are quite small, and to prevent the rice spraying out onto the ground when it is being pounded a broad band of bark is placed on edge round the depression. The inner room contains the hearth (*amethu*), with the beds<sup>1</sup> (*aze*) of the family round the walls. There is a bamboo tray suspended over the fire,

<sup>1</sup> An Eastern Rengma bed stands very high on its legs, and is invariably hewn from one piece of wood. When a husband and wife have been married for some time they have separate beds. Anyone may sit on the wife's bed, but it is bad manners for a stranger to recline on it.



RICH MAN'S HOUSE : WESTERN RENGMA



RICH MAN'S HOUSE : EASTERN RENGMA





and above that another square of bamboo basket-work from which hang taro roots that have to be dried slowly. Round the hearth there are stools (*ape*). These are carved from single blocks of wood, lightness being gained by cutting out as much as possible from underneath. They are neatly made and a dog-tooth pattern often ornaments the edges. The congestion in the inner room exactly resembles that in a Western Rengma house. There is, however, a better light at night. By the fire stands a lampstand (*alathe*)—a round block of wood with a broken crock on it. When a light is wanted at night, a splinter of pine (*akhela*) is lighted and laid on this. Outside the front door is a low bamboo platform (*asakeye*), on which the family spend a lot of their time. Meals are often eaten there, and it is a handy spot from which to chat to the neighbours on either side or to people passing in the street. In the cool of the morning in Meluri one may see a row of platforms each occupied by a man sipping his rice-beer and sunning himself, while not a stitch of clothing intercepts the beneficial rays. These platforms are almost unknown in Western Rengma villages. In the Southern group they are never made, and in the Northern group no one who has not given the *Kethi Kiyatha* Feast of Merit may build one.<sup>1</sup> When built, they are called *ashuchi*.

A man who proposes to build a house first collects all the material he requires. On the appointed day all his friends and relations help him, being recompensed for their trouble by the ample food and drink he supplies. One day suffices to complete a house, and the method is the same throughout the tribe. The site having been levelled, the required number of wall-posts (*khapha ketung*, A, *mazunga*, B, *akhānyo*, C) are fixed firmly in the ground. Then the line of three centre-posts (*khatsong ketung*, A, *azungtung*, B, *atyupfu*, C) is placed in position and firmly fixed to the wall-posts with cross ties (*khephre*, A, *akhi*, B, *athukru*, C). Along the centre-posts is placed the roof-tree (*khatsong*, A; *māmuyi kheyi*, B, *amulyu*, C), semicircular notches being cut in the tops of the posts to receive it. Then come the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 191.

purlins (*khapha kām*, A, *makwe'e*, B, *akhukwa*, C), and after them the rafters (*kharung*, A, *māmwe'e*, B, *arhozo*, C), over which is placed a second roof-tree to hold them in position. The frame of the house is then complete, and the walls (*chatho*, A, *akhachi*, B, *akhra*, C) of strong bamboo matting can be fixed. Finally the thatch (*ih*, A, *anis*, B, *alushu*, C) is laid course by course, working upwards from the eaves.

Special ceremonies attend the setting in place of the hearthstones, round which the life of the family will centre. In the Southern group of the Western Rengmas the owner himself puts them in position on the evening of the day on which the house is finished and makes new fire with a fire-thong<sup>1</sup>. Nothing more is done that day, but on the evening of the next day the master of the house kills a hen which has never laid an egg and eats it with his family. He thereby removes the tabu on speaking to strangers which he has observed since the morning of the day before. In the Northern group, when the house is ready, in the evening an old man of the builder's clan strangles a young hen and takes the omens from the position of the legs. He then makes new fire with a fire-thong inside the house near the door. Having plucked the fowl, he roasts little scraps of the flesh and offers them on leaves to the spirits of the house. Then he makes the hearth and lights the fire in the inner room, and all present eat and drink. He sleeps in the house with the family that night. Next morning the owner ties to the centre-post a small offering of rice-beer in a leaf. Among the Eastern Rengmas the owner utters a prayer for good fortune as he places the hearthstones in position, and with his family eats a meal of rice, fish and ginger only.

The progress a man has made in performing the series of Feasts of Merit<sup>2</sup> is shown by the shape and ornamentation of the front of his house. There are three stages among the Western Rengmas. A poor man's house is flat in front, with no semicircular projection of the eaves. A man who has given the first of the big feasts (*Zengkes* in the Southern group and *Azikesa* in the Northern<sup>3</sup>) adds a semicircular

<sup>1</sup> See p. 71

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 181 *sqq.*

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 184, 190

porch to the front of his house, with a semicircular eave above it. In the Northern group the porch may be of boards, often with mithan heads carved on them, but in the Southern group this privilege is reserved for those who have performed the final mithan sacrifice. In the Northern group a man who has done the *Kethi* sacrifice obtains almost full privileges. He has a double instead of a single projecting eave in front, and a carved post (*awung*) inside the porch. After the final sacrifice (*Asi knyathi*) he puts up "house horns," often with wooden birds on them, after the Angami style,<sup>1</sup> but much smaller, and a post in the porch more elaborately carved with human and mithan heads. In the Southern series there are fewer stages. After the *Zengkesi* feast no further alteration in the shape of the house takes place till the final mithan sacrifice (*Gu kegha*) has been performed. Then a man is entitled to full privileges. His porch is of planks carved with mithan heads, and he may put up a carved post<sup>2</sup> (*pfu*) inside it. No "house horns" are added. Among the Eastern Rengmas porches are not added to the fronts of the houses. After the second buffalo sacrifice (*Akezu kesa*) a carved cross-beam is put across the front of the house outside. The pattern is a simple one of bands and lines coloured with lime and charcoal, with a carved head for each one the owner has taken. After the final sacrifice (*Aowiphu*) the wooden door of the house is sometimes decorated with a carving of a buffalo head<sup>3</sup> and a carved post is erected in front of the house so that it supports the extreme end of the gable. In Melum the pattern is a simple one of lines, bands and buffalo heads. In Sahunyu the posts are forked so that the two ends project above the house, and the pattern is a more elaborate one of breasts and tails.

<sup>1</sup> See illustration facing p. 51 of *Angami Nagas*. In Madagascar the rich put up exactly similar house-horns with wooden birds perching on them (see Sibree, *Madagascar and its People*, p. 203).

<sup>2</sup> In the Southern group only the Kentennenyu, Nsenyu and Rasenyu clans may carve human heads on their house posts. The reason why other clans may not do so is not known.

<sup>3</sup> So conventionalised is the carving that tushes are sometimes added, so that the head might be that of wild boar with horns or a buffalo with tushes.

*Manufactures*

*Spinning* All Rengmas grow enough cotton for their own needs, the Western Rengmas even selling a surplus to Angamis. It is essential that every bride should know how to spin and weave, and tiny girls can often be seen busy with little toy looms. The process is exactly the same as in other tribes. After plucking, the cotton is rolled out with a round stick on a flat stone to extract the seeds. A busy housewife will often get an old woman to do this in return for a meal. To gin the cotton, a bow (*phaphya*, A, *khukhuzu*, B, *khakheli*, C) is used. This is of bamboo, with a thin strip of cane as a string. The raw cotton is flicked with this till all the staples are thoroughly separated, and it is then loosely rolled between the hands into sausage-shaped lumps. It is then ready for spinning. The story goes that in the old, old days, when all Rengmas lived together on Therugu Hill, there were two sisters, called Thongwisu and Loyule, who could clean and spin cotton faster than any woman has ever done since. They used each to take an armful of raw cotton to the girls' sleeping-house in the evening, and by morning it was all spun and wound in skeins. Therefore when a Western Rengma woman begins to clean cotton, she always says, "May my hands be as strong as Ndu's,<sup>1</sup> who could level mountains. May they be as quick as the hands of Thongwisu and Loyule. May the seeds fall from the cotton as fast as goat's dung." Similarly, when she begins to spin she says, "May my hands be as strong as the hands of Ndu. May they be as quick as the hands of Thongwisu and Loyule. When I stretch out the spindle to wind the thread may it reach to the plains." The spindle (*ni*, A, *amnu*, B and C) consists of a small disc of stone pierced by a piece of hard wood. The whorl is of soapstone. This is ground down till perfectly even, and pierced with a piece of iron twirled between the hands. It is then smeared with ash from the bowl of a pipe and baked hard in the fire. To spin a woman sits with her skirt pulled up to the top of her thigh and tucked in between her legs. A crock with

<sup>1</sup> See p 165.





MAN WEARING A ZOYU PI CLOTH : WESTERN RENGMA



A SPINNING PARTY : WESTERN RENGMA

[To face page 65.]

a piece of rag spread over it lies on the ground on her right side. She places the lower end of the spindle, nearest to which the whorl is, on the rag, and spins it against her right thigh, feeding it from a "sausage" of cotton held in her left hand. She draws the "sausage" away as the thread (*m*, A, *alo*, B and C) is spun, letting the spun thread wind onto the spindle-shaft at intervals. Should the thread break in spinning, a quick twist of the broken ends between finger and thumb soon mends it. When one or more spindles are full, the thread is wound off onto a frame (*phakhe*, A, *akwokhe*, B, *alokhe*, C) made of two short uprights of bamboo fixed in a long, horizontal piece. From the frame it is taken off in skeins and treated with rice-water. The skeins are carefully put in a pot, and rice-flour is boiled up in another pot and poured on them. They are well rinsed in it and left to cool in the liquid. Then they are wrung out and dried in the sun, being jerked at intervals to get rid of excessive flour. When the skeins are thoroughly dry, the owner winds the thread into balls ready for weaving. To do this she sits down and holds the skein she is working at round her extended knees. More rarely they are put onto a simple revolving frame (*harilovung*, A, *alokheshu*, B and C,) for winding off.

Spinning parties, though unknown among the Eastern Rengmas, are great institutions in the Western section of the tribe. When held on special terraces cut into a sunny slope outside the village they are called *tehembing* (A) or *amuzong* (B). When held at night in the girls' sleeping-house they are called *katsu* (A) or *alashu* (B). All the girls using one sleeping-house, and those who have recently left them to get married, club together to provide food and drink and sit for hours on end spinning and weaving. It is a popular amusement for young men to attend the night parties. The light is bad and every girl has both her hands occupied, so that a great deal of familiarity meets with no resistance.

*Dyeing*—The Eastern Rengmas know no dyeing process, and have always bought any coloured thread they require from their Eastern Angami neighbours. The Western



Rengmas, however, use dark blue, red and, more rarely, yellow dye. The whole process is carried out by women, who seem to be under no special tabus while so engaged. In all cases thread is dyed while in the skein. For blue dye the leaves of *Strobilanthes flaccidifolius* (*nitsapsu*, A, *mesempaa*, B) are used. This is the universal Naga dye, and will give a colour approaching black<sup>1</sup>. The plant is grown in the gardens on the outskirts of villages or in patches cleared in heavy jungle. Women alone pick it, and when sold a bundle of heads of the plant big enough to be encircled by the two hands fetches two annas or one day's work. When required for use, the leaves are thoroughly boiled and a thick layer of them is put at the bottom of a pot. Over them are put skeins of white thread, with another layer of leaves on the top. Cold water is poured in and the thread left to soak for three or four days. It is then dried and again put in cold water with some fresh leaves and brought to the boil. When cool it is taken out and finally dried.

Red dye is made from the stem of a creeper called *ghingri* (A) or *nachakhe* (B). The bark is rubbed off and the stem pounded up. To this a leaf called *atamun* is added in the Northern group in order to improve the colour. The thread is boiled with the dye and allowed to dry. It is then boiled again. Most tribes are rapidly taking to the dyeing powders sold in Kohima bazaar, but Rengmas still prefer their own vegetable dye. This dye can also be used for goat's hair, but this, though not absolutely tabu, is rarely done, there being a strong feeling that the process is in some way detrimental to the crops.

Yellow dye is made from the flowers of a tree called *nkhangi* (A) or *atonsü* (B), which blooms in the early spring. The flowers are pounded up and the thread is soaked in water between layers of them. No boiling is necessary. In villages of the Northern group a root called *akhaong* is pounded and mixed with the flowers to give a deeper yellow. Occasionally *akhaong* root is used alone.

In the Northern group dyeing can be done only between

<sup>1</sup> The Angamis seem to be the only tribe which uses a true black dye. This is made from the bark of a certain species of big leafed oak.

harvest and the *Lowi layang kechenna* ("red thread pot genna") in the middle of January, after which the sowing of millet begins. In the Southern group the time is extended to the *Terikebong nihakebong kennu* ("red cane red thread genna") at the end of March, just before the rice is sown.

*Weaving*—Weaving can begin as soon as the first-fruits of the new rice have been eaten. The Rengma loom (*khanu*, A, *atsukethu*, B, *atsuketho*, C) is of the type known as the Indonesian tension loom, and identical with that used by neighbouring Naga tribes. A diagram is given on page 50 of *The Sema Nagas*. To keep a tension on the warp (*dukleru*, A, *athakheye*, B, *athakherhe*, C), the weaver sits with the weaving belt (*dupharhe*, A, *thaphuni*, B, *atsukho*, C) in the small of her back. Each end is brought round and looped onto the lower rod (*tezamvu*, A, *akennam*, B, *akenno*, C), round which the warp lies. The weft (*dukhampha*, A, *athakhethu*, B and C) is carried on a simple shuttle (*dupchua*, A, *anongtsu*, B, *atsuto*, C) which the woman shoots backwards and forwards as the heddle (*dunyu*, A, *ala*, B, *arna*, C) is raised every alternate pick. After each passing of the shuttle the weft is beaten up with the sword (*duche*, A, *athachu*, B, *athachu*, C), which is then inserted in the next pick and turned on edge to increase the shed. The lease rod is called *dupung* (A) or *arphu* (B and C) and the shed-stick *khekhingvu* (A) or *ashenno* (B and C). A loom is so typically a woman's possession that a man may not step over or touch one. Lengths of woven cloth are cut to the right length with bamboo knives (*giniyi*, A, *ashahu*, B, *anutsa*, C), it being absolutely forbidden to use a "dao" for this purpose. They are then sown together down their edges with a bamboo needle (*pyeng*, A, *apyeng*, B, *archo*, C). Among the Eastern Rengmas a man may never use a needle at all, but among the Western Rengmas he may mend his own or another man's clothes and may sew cowries on a "lengta". He may on no account sew a woman's clothes.

*Painting on Cloth*. Though the conventional pattern is entirely different, the Western Rengma art of painting on cloth closely resembles that of the Aos.<sup>1</sup> These are, as far

<sup>1</sup> See *Ao Nagas*, p. 94.

as I know, the only two tribes who practise it. Among the Rengmas there used to be cloth-painters in Tseminyu, but they have died out, and only two or three men in Teso-phenyu know the art, which is sometimes said to be degrading and unlucky. Of recent years the invention of new designs has given it a fresh lease of life among both the Aos and Rengmas, but it is bound to be killed in time by the spread of Baptist propaganda forbidding the use of the cloths on which the painted bands are sewn. The medium used is the sap of a tree called *khezung* (A) or *akhetung* (B). This is collected in December or January by making slanting cuts in the bark and fixing short lengths of hollow bamboo to catch the sap. A man collecting sap must remain chaste, and may not eat eggs the night before. It has to be used fresh, and is applied to a strip of white cloth with a splinter of bamboo, a section of bamboo being used to stamp circles. When first it is applied the sap is grey, but it dries jet black, and will last for many years in all weathers.

*Pottery* —Clay cooking-pots are made by women only, and in no other Rengma village but Tseminyu.<sup>1</sup> The season for manufacture is from the *Ngada* festival at the end of November to the *La kethu kennu* ("Pot-making genna") immediately before the sowing of millet begins in the middle of January. A woman who proposes to make pots may not catch pigs or fowls on that morning. If she does, the pots will break. The process is identical with that obtaining among the Lhotas.<sup>2</sup>

Pottery pipe-bowls are made by both men and women in Tseminyu, but, while women may make them for sale,<sup>3</sup> men may only make them for their own use. The process is very simple. A lump of clay of the required size is shaped by hand on a flat stone and pierced from the bottom with a sharp piece of iron or bamboo.

*Woodwork* —Rengmas are far from being skilled workers in wood. Nothing in the nature of a saw is known, and planks are hacked out of the solid. A tree having been

<sup>1</sup> Pot-making is definitely tabu in all Eastern Rengma villages. They buy what they want from the Kalyo-Kengyu village of Laruri.

<sup>2</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, pp. 40 and 41.

<sup>3</sup> They are sold at two for one anna.

felled and cut into convenient lengths with a "dao," each length is split with an axe (*ndri*, A, *amphu*, B, *amphu* or *amvo*, C), wooden wedges being used as required. Each half-log provides only one plank, to make which the wood is cut down to the required thickness with an adze (*kekwa*, A, *achung kechazi*, B, *atsako* or *akechuwa*, C). To square and carve posts, too, "daos" and adzes are the only implements used. The Eastern Rengmas do no finer woodwork than this. It is contrary to custom for them to make wooden food dishes, and they get all their supplies from Kizare, to the north, who specialise in this work.<sup>1</sup> A few wooden dishes of the Sema pattern<sup>2</sup> are made in Western Rengma villages. They are roughed out with adzes and crudely made iron chisels and knives, and finished off by polishing with the dried leaf of a species of *figus* called *khero* (A) or *akhowo* (B).

*Leather-work*—Leather, in the sense of tanned hide, is unknown. For shields and body armour raw hide used to be dried in the sun and scraped clean of hair and fat. Both then and at intervals later it was well rubbed with stalks of wild begonia (*nkomu*, A, *achuwe*, B), which is still the favourite polisher of sepoy's of the local battalion of Assam Rifles. Hide never seems to have been worked by the Eastern Rengmas, and even the Western Rengmas nowadays only use it occasionally for belts or bags.

*Metal-work*—It is tabu for Meluri and Sahunyu to do iron-work. Lephoru are allowed to do it, but rarely make anything, preferring to buy from other tribes. The Western Rengmas, on the other hand, are expert smiths, and their spearheads and "daos" are traded over a very large area. Manufacture may be carried out throughout the year, save during the nine days at the end of January following the completion of millet sowing and from the beginning of rice sowing early in April to the first "genna" for the sprouting rice (*Lo kesu kennu* (A) or *Ayi kesu kechenna* (B)) early in May. According to tradition, the first smiths belonged to

<sup>1</sup> Kizare resemble Southern Sangtams in outward appearance, but speak a language of their own, and claim no affinity with any other village.

<sup>2</sup> See *Sema Nagas*, p. 41.

the Khinzonyu and Tepenyu clans Nowadays a man of any clan may practise the trade, though, as a matter of fact, no one of the Nsenyu or Sampinyu clan has ever done so The smithies are open sheds in the village All the instruments, such as hammers and tongs, are nowadays of foreign manufacture, but the pump bellows are of the type used by the Semas<sup>1</sup> Supplies of iron are obtained in the form of old (or freshly stolen) tea-garden hoes from the plains and old "dao" blades, which are always readily bought by smiths To stain black the bases of spearheads the sap of a wild fig called *khero* (A), *akhowo* (B), *achichu* (C)<sup>2</sup> is used This same sap, mixed with rice-husks, is also used to fix "dao" blades in their hafts Smiths are often almost whole-time men, and many tabus would be intolerable to them One, however, is important, the flesh of the Chinese pangolin, or scaly anteater, may on no account be eaten by a smith or brought to his house or forge If he breaks this tabu he will never be able to weld iron properly, and the pieces will remain separate as do the scales of the anteater<sup>3</sup>

*Stonework* —Rough stone is used for levelling house-sites, the retaining walls of irrigated terraces, graves, monuments, etc., but dressed stone is never used The only stone ever

<sup>1</sup> See illustration facing p 52 of *Sema Nagas* Bellows of the same type are used in Polynesia and Madagascar (see Sibree, *Madagascar and its People*, p 226)

<sup>2</sup> The figs on this tree ripen one by one over a very long period They are considered both nourishing and delicious, and particularly beneficial when the bowels are unduly loose The Western Angamis tell stories of this fruit It is said that once when Kohma was afflicted with famine many people subsisted entirely on it, and that a man and his wife by eating one fig a day each retained enough strength to cultivate a terrace from which they reaped a whole bin of rice Another story is that a man had a real son and an adopted son, of which the latter was the better in every way The father, fearing lest he should usurp the inheritance of his son, determined to lose him in the jungle He therefore told him one day to climb a fig tree and stay there Implicitly obedient, the boy waited in the tree month after month, living on the figs and hoping his foster-father would come and fetch him Once he prayed that the figs might ripen at a greater rate than one a day, but he was warned in a dream that it would be bad for him if they did At last he was found by a hunter and brought home By this time his hair had grown right down to his shoulders and he was very strong Later in life he became a noted warrior

<sup>3</sup> For beliefs regarding this animal see p 223 It is called *tepyu* in the Southern language, and may never be eaten by a man of the Tepenyu clan—one of the two original iron-working clans—whether he be a smith or not

worked by Rengmas is a kind of soapstone, which is carved into pipe-bowls and spindle whorls with rough iron knives and chisels. Before use it is smeared with nicotine and baked in the fire to harden it.

*Basket-work*—Baskets are of all shapes and sizes, from the rough little receptacle made in a few minutes into which a live chicken is rammed head first for a journey, to the carefully woven basket in which rice is carried up from the fields. Bamboo and cane are the materials invariably used. In some cases the sexes use different-shaped baskets for the same work. For example, among the Eastern Rengmas a woman's rice-basket (*akhutsa*) has a pointed base like a Sema basket, while a man's basket (*pechukhu*) has a flat base after the Konyak manner.

#### *Fire-making*

Matches are rapidly coming into use nowadays, but often for ordinary purposes and invariably on ceremonial occasions fires are lighted with a firestick (*ma gi*, A, *ākeprau*, B, *atuma*, C) and thong (*ma psu*, A, *anyr mu*, B, *amr ti*, C)<sup>1</sup>. The stick is, if possible, made from a small tree called *tsomho* (A), or *athama* (B and C), which bears bunches of little bitter berries in January. To make fire a small piece of this wood is split half-way down and a little stone inserted to keep the crack open. A notch is then cut in the under-side to keep the thong in place. The thong is about two feet long and is made of bamboo shaved down. The shavings are collected, the stick with the thong in position placed over them, and the thong pulled backwards and forwards rapidly by a man squatting with one foot on the stick to keep it in position. The tinder begins to smoulder in about thirty seconds, and is carefully blown into a flame. The Eastern Rengmas for ordinary purposes, but never for ceremonies, also use flint and steel (*amr khu khu khawa*—"fire striker"). For tinder the inner lining of the bark of the sago-palm is used.

<sup>1</sup> For the distribution of this method see Balfour "Frictional Fire-making with a Flexible Sawing-thong," *J R A I*, XLIV. It used to extend to Madagascar, where the Zanakanony aborigines used it. See Linton, *The Tanala*, Field Museum of Natural History, Anthrop Series, XXII, p. 22.

To save having to make fire too frequently, especially in bad weather, smouldering torches are made of the shredded bark of a tree called *penyu*, A, *ameyr*, B, or *amethe*, C, which is also used as soap. A torch of this bark will keep alight long enough for the most distant fields to be reached from home, and a fire to be lighted from it in the shelter of the field-house.

### *Currency*

Ordinary money is now used everywhere when trade is not carried on by barter, but a true currency exists among the Western Rengmas in the form of specially made large spear-heads. These are never sharpened, and are used only in marriage prices. They pass from hand to hand, and are never hafted. Their use is compulsory, for it is believed that if at least one spear-head is not included in a woman's marriage price she will never bear children.

In the Tesophenyu group only is there a fixed relation between cattle and rice. There fifty baskets of rice are regarded as equal to one cow.<sup>1</sup>

The Eastern Rengmas used to use as currency 'daos' of a special type called *khara nyu*, imported from the Tangkhul country, where they were made. I have secured one which is double-edged, with the top corners prolonged into points and a rib running down one side. Small iron digging-hoes were also used as money.

### *Trade*

Salt is the one necessity of life which few Naga villages can produce. There being no salt springs in the Western Naga Hills, the tribes there have from time immemorial been compelled to obtain their supplies from the plains. The Lhotas in the foothills used to go down and buy it

<sup>1</sup> An old Angami table of barter runs as follows —

1 male slave	= 1 cow and 3 conch shells
1 female slave	= 3 cows and 4 or 5 conch-shells
1 cow	= 10 conch-shells
1 pig	= 2 conch-shells
1 goat	= 2 conch-shells
1 fowl	= 1 packet of salt

A conch-shell was reckoned as Re 1 of plains currency.

They in turn sold it to the Rengmas, who passed it on to Sema and Angami villages for distribution. The profits must have been large. The Rengmas paid one cow for two, three or four parcels of salt, according to the state of the market, when they handed it on they got a cow for one parcel of salt. Within the Rengma country a lump of salt as large as a big toe was the standard wage for a day's work. For Rengmas to deal direct with the plains was sufficient to involve them in war with the Lhotas. Nevertheless, they used to attempt to do so, with the idea of cutting out the middlemen's profits.<sup>1</sup> Parties used to slip down through the jungle, blazing a trail as they went. Their camping-places were well hidden, and they had the curious custom of planting onions which would be ready for eating by the time they returned some two months later.

Tseminyu contains expert smiths, and a large trade in "daos" and spears has always been carried on. All Western Rengma villages, too, bring raw cotton for sale in the Angami country.

Though the Eastern Rengmas have salt springs (*azukhre*) on their land, it is tabu for them to make salt (*amitsü*) from them, though the salt water (*akhazu*) is used for cooking meat and vegetables. Lephori used to make salt, but ascribed the poorness of their crops to the practice, and gave it up. Salt is, however, made in Akhegwo, Yisi, Yisisu and other neighbouring Sangtam villages, and for the distribution of this to the Eastern Angamis the Rengmas act as middlemen. They pay Re 1/- for 100 cakes, and make a profit of 25 to 50 per cent on the re-sale. This is their chief trade. Less important is the trade in pots from Laruri, where the clay is particularly suitable for pot-making. Another Eastern Rengma article of trade is dried fish. They obtain a steady supply from the Tizu River, and dry the smaller fish over their fires. These find a ready

<sup>1</sup> Nowadays the salt brought up from the plains is all imported from Calcutta. Formerly, when transport was more difficult and expensive, villages in the Konyak area who had salt-wells near the plains used to take salt down. This would travel west along the plains and be reimported into the hills by the Lhotas. It is the Konyak salt to which Mills refers as having been brought down in large quantities by Nagas (*Report on the Province of Assam*, p. 29).



sale as far away as Kohima, where they are considered more tasty than the Manipuri sun-dried fish. The smell is equally abominable.

### *Loans*

Rice, not money, is ordinarily lent by one Rengma to another. It is considered incumbent on those who have reaped good crops to help those whose granaries are empty before the next harvest comes round. To refuse a loan is a churlish act in Rengma eyes, and the interest nominally charged is not usually demanded in full,<sup>1</sup> and never runs more than one year, however long the debt remains unpaid. Rice is lent by the basket, which is filled level with the brim, and repayment is measured in the basket in which the rice was originally taken. In the Southern group of Western Rengmas the interest on one basket of rice is the amount of additional rice that can be piled onto the basket filled level with the brim.<sup>2</sup> On two baskets the interest is one basket. On three or more baskets it is two baskets up to five or six baskets, the limit of the amount ordinarily borrowed from one man. The standard loan is three baskets, for which five are repaid. In the Northern group the standard loan is five baskets, for which seven are repaid. The interest on one basket is one basket, and above that two baskets up to the standard loan. The Eastern Rengma interest is lower still, being only one basket up to five baskets, the usual limit of a loan. A man lending rice to a number of people keeps one bamboo tube for each borrower, containing a pebble for every basket due back, including interest.

The amount of money lent is insignificant, and there being no ancestral custom governing the interest, the lender charges whatever he thinks he can get—and is usually content eventually with a good deal less than he originally demanded.<sup>3</sup> In any case, interest only runs for one year.

<sup>1</sup> Not so the interest charged by Angamis round Kohima. If he can, a rich man will pile on compound interest till the loan reaches a ridiculous figure. He then squeezes what he can out of the wretched debtor.

<sup>2</sup> In this particular case additional interest is charged for delay, and if the basket is not repaid after the first harvest, two baskets in all have to be repaid.

<sup>3</sup> Here again the sophisticated Angamis differ from the Rengmas. Among them, especially in Kohima and Khonoma, contact with civilisation

In the Southern group of Western Rengmas the highest rate, which is the normal rate when everyone is trying to find cash to pay their yearly house tax to Government, is two annas per rupee per month. In the Northern group 50 per cent per year seems to be more or less fixed as normal. In the Eastern Rengma villages very little money is in circulation, and two annas in the rupee per month would be demanded for a loan.

*Agriculture and the Ceremonies connected with it*

A Naga's very life depends on his crops. It is therefore not surprising that from childhood to old age he spends most of his days in his fields, and that almost all the ceremonies of his religion are designed to protect and increase his crops. Every man works his own field, and if by any chance he does not own any land, he rents a piece, which he farms for the year. Landlords who sit at ease and farm broad acres with hired labour are unknown, and it is rare to find a man making his living by working for others.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious, however, that communal labour is needed at times to get through the work on fields which are ready for weeding or harvest or any other process which must be carried out at a particular time. For this purpose, as in all Naga tribes, field-companies (*logwa*, A, *aziza*, B, *arovu*, C) are formed. These consist of boys and girls or men and women of roughly equal age. A boy or a girl joins the field-company of his contemporaries—usually inhabitants of the same "khel"—and stays in it for life. A company of young people may be twenty or thirty strong, and of married people, more of whom are likely to have their own work to do in their houses on any given day, ten or a dozen. There is no objection to men and women of the same clan being in the same field-company, for the songs and conversation are perfectly proper. The day begins with song. As soon as

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and foreign trade has produced a class of almost professional money-lenders, who charge high interest and do their utmost to get every penny of it.

<sup>1</sup> The only cases are exceptionally lazy individuals, old people who feel they cannot undertake to farm a plot of their own, and men who from sickness or any other reason have been unable to fell jungle at the beginning of the year.

the company is ready to begin work, the members stand in line and chant for a few minutes in honour of the owner of the field. Then they begin the hoeing or weeding, or whatever the task for the day may be, the whole company working uphill in a long line, with a man and woman on each flank leading the chant with which they invariably accompany their labours. Sometimes a well-to-do man will hire a company for the day, feeding them in return and giving each a small basket of rice for the evening meal and one large basket for every five or six workers, which the company will store and use for buying meat at the great *Ngada* ceremony<sup>1</sup>. More usually, however, the company works in the field of each of its members in turn. Or again, one member may work in the field of each of the other members in turn, and is then allowed to offer a man the work of the whole company either in payment of a debt to him or in return for the baskets of rice he is due to pay.

The very few irrigated terraces (*khuno*, A, *akhul*, B) there are in the most southern of the Western Rengma villages are recent copies of the Angami method of cultivation, and play an insignificant part in the economics of the tribe. The Western Rengmas depend for their livelihood on "jhuming," the method of agriculture by which jungle is felled, allowed to dry, and burnt, and the crop sown on the ground fertilised by the ashes<sup>2</sup>. There is a popular idea that jhuming tribes fell and destroy virgin forest every year. This is, of course, absurd. All suitable land in the Rengma country was taken up generations ago, and now lies fallow under secondary jungle for the six to twelve years rotation on which each block is cut<sup>3</sup>. What little virgin jungle there

<sup>1</sup> See p. 173

<sup>2</sup> May there not be a faint memory of a time when similar shifting cultivation was practised in Europe? In a Scandinavian folk-song a fairy child, singing of her great age, says "Seven times have I seen the forest of Lessø felled," and in a Carinthian song a fairy child says

"Now I am already so old

That the meadow by yonder house

Has been nine times meadow and nine times wood"

Géza Roheim, *The Riddle of the Sphinx*, pp. 18, 19

<sup>3</sup> A few rich men have so much land that they can leave fields fallow for twenty, or even thirty years. The longer land is left fallow the better the crop it will carry when cleared, and the fewer the weeds that will grow up with the rice

is on steep ground, and is used as a timber reserve. Ordinarily two crops are taken off a piece of land before it is allowed to revert to jungle. In a few places, however, three crops can be taken off particularly fertile land. On the other hand, the sandy soil near Sentenyu and Phesinyu will give only one crop, for by the time the second year comes all the small rootlets left unburnt in the soil have decayed and heavy rain is liable to wash it entirely away.

The staple crop is rice (*shu*, A, *asu*, B). Millet (*nsu*, A, *asenta*, B) is an important crop with Nagas in high villages. The Rengmas observe due "gennas" for it, and a little is grown even in hot villages so that the ancient customs should not die out. But except in Therugunyu and Thegwepegedenyu no great quantity is grown by Western Rengmas. It is sometimes eaten mixed with rice, but is chiefly used for brewing beer. Job's-tears (*nsha*, A, *ashentha*, B) is grown entirely for drink. Maize (*samphurüchi*, A, *santapfo*, B), though an important crop among the Eastern Rengmas, is little grown by the Western Rengmas. At most a few plants are sown among the rice and the heads roasted and given to children to eat. Occasionally a brew is made from it nowadays, but the resulting beer is not popular. The kind of millet called *tarho* (A) or *akhu* (B) produces a beer which many people are forbidden to drink,<sup>1</sup> but is nevertheless often sown round the edges of fields, as it is believed that the red leaves of the young plants scare rats away. If the owner of the field cannot drink the beer, he simply uproots the plants and throws them away when they are no longer needed. Another beer that many people cannot drink<sup>2</sup> is made from the giant red millet (*nyendhru*, A, *akhayr*, B). Very little is therefore grown. Taro (*vyn*, A, *api*, B) was probably the original Naga staple crop, as it still is of the Konyaks. A considerable amount is grown by Western Rengmas on the patches in the rice-fields where clods and stones have been collected. Some men grow as much as twenty or thirty loads, and it forms an important part of the diet of the poor. It can be eaten both boiled and roast. If lifted ripe, it will keep a con-

<sup>1</sup> See p 114

<sup>2</sup> See p 113

siderable time, though roots grown in very wet soil are apt to turn slimy unless dried in the sun before they are stored. It is noticeable that, as the oldest food, taro, and not rice, is offered to the dead. Cotton (*tephu*, A, *akhakhi*, B) is grown on poor soil on the low, hot slopes. The best place for chillies (*terasha*, A, *atosha*, B) is where a big log has smouldered long at the burning of the jungle and has thoroughly baked the soil. Ginger (*gwü*, A, *asung*, B) is grown in patches in the rice-fields. For oil in their food Rengmas are dependent on white oil seed (*chu*, A, *agashi*, B) or black oil seed (*tetsung*, A, *apuchong*, B). The former is sown with millet, usually on the edges of fields, so as to be easily accessible, and the latter with rice, on patches where the soil is poor. Lentils of two kinds, the low-growing "stinking lentil" (*rhüda*, A, *akhayrzang*, B), so called from its abominable smell, and the climbing lentil (*rhutsi*, A, *akhaha*, B), are grown. The former is sown in July on little patches devoted to it, and the latter among the rice in April. Bottle gourds (*tsung*, A, *asuza*, B) are grown with special care to form receptacles for rice-beer. A menstruating woman or a man who has indulged in sexual intercourse the night before is forbidden to go near them. Edible gourds are of the red variety (*rhamu*, A, *ahamu wuketsowa*—"boiling gourd," B) and white variety (*rhamu khamhayr*, A, *ahamu khamugwa*, B). Cucumbers (*khonku*, A, *amezi*, B) are also grown. Very few bananas (*teyrsha*, A and B) are grown. They contain seeds, and it is believed that if a woman swallows a seed by mistake she will produce a bastard.

It is impossible to describe the processes of agriculture without touching on the ceremonies connected with them, so interwoven are work and religion in the life of a Naga. I have attempted in an appendix <sup>1</sup> to give the full list of Western Rengma agricultural ceremonies month by month throughout the year. It will therefore be enough if I mention the more important ones as they occur in the course of my description.

In order to save labour in clearing paths and scaring

<sup>1</sup> See pp 310 *sqq*

birds, a small village will have all its fields in one block, and a big village in not more than two or three. The agricultural year closes with the great *Ngada* festival<sup>1</sup> early in December, and as soon as that is over the work for the next season begins. The block to be felled for the year, sufficiently big to grow crops for the whole village, is chosen by general consent from land which has been long enough under jungle. Anyone who does not happen to own a field in that block can easily and cheaply lease one from someone who has surplus land there. Each man in the Southern villages observes one day's "genna," called *Loghushu ket-sannu*, before he begins to fell his portion.<sup>2</sup> In the Northern villages the whole village simultaneously keeps one day's "genna" called *Phachasha kechenna*, after which anyone can begin felling. The jungle is left to dry in the sun, and the fields of the previous year are dug over and weeded with iron diggers (*dū*, A, *amokhu*, B), ready for the millet and Job's-tears. Every man when he begins a day's work at digging or sowing time prays that his arm may be as strong as that of *Ndu*,<sup>3</sup> the godling who was able to level mountains in a night and made the plains of Assam, but at harvest the name of *Ndu* may not be so much as mentioned lest the harvest be all reaped very quickly and very little rice got. Early in January the big *Zu kuli* ceremony of purification is held in Southern villages.<sup>4</sup> In Northern villages the corresponding ceremony takes place only once in seven years. After this the fields can be burnt as soon as they are sufficiently dry. Millet and Job's-tears are sown during January. The seed is sown broadcast, and covered with a stroke of the digger. At this time field-houses (*the*, A, *apowo*, B) are built in the old fields which

<sup>1</sup> See p 173

<sup>2</sup> The jungle is, of course, felled with iron "daos." The numerous stone celts found near the surface of the ground show that the Naga Hills were inhabited by a people with a stone culture in fairly recent times. How they could have cultivated the heavily wooded hillsides without the use of iron is an interesting problem to which the answer does not seem to have been yet sought. "Jhumming" seems to have been practised in North China in Neolithic times (C. W. Bishop, "The Neolithic Age in North China," *Antiquity*, Vol. VII, No. 28, pp. 389, 392, 394), but that country seems to have been mostly grassland.

<sup>3</sup> See p 165

<sup>4</sup> See p 174.

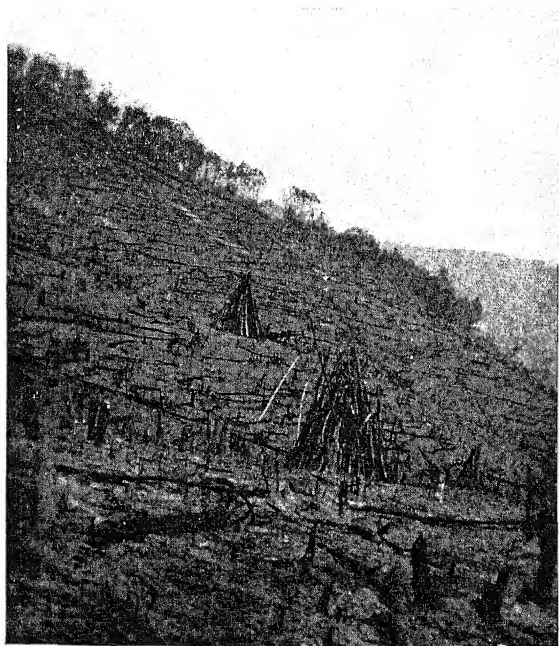
have just been cleared. They are used as shelters when working. A man who has earned the right to add an extra layer of eaves to the front of his house<sup>1</sup> adds one to the porch of his field-house. Two layers are, however, never added. In distant fields from which the owners do not wish to come home every night, and where wild pig and other animals are likely to be specially troublesome, shelters for sleeping are built on platforms in trees. It is believed to be healthier to sleep in trees than at ground level, and from the tree-shelter strings can be pulled at night to operate the bamboo clappers that scare animals from the crops. Before a man climbs up for the night he plants three "panjis" at the foot of the tree to keep evil spirits away. In the third week of the month a "genna" called *Pyeng kekhe ketsann'u* (A) or *Akhukh kechesa kechenna* (B) marks the end of the sowing. During February the millet and Job's-tears sprout, and the fields have to be kept weeded. For this purpose an iron semicircular hoe (*teghu gu*, A, *ameye akesu gu*, B) is ordinarily used, but villages which cannot conveniently buy them still use the primitive bamboo hoe (*gu*, A, *amu akesu gu*, B) from which the iron hoe is derived.<sup>2</sup> By March the felled jungle is thoroughly dry and is fired. All is then ready for the preparation of the fields for and the sowing of the all-important rice. To mark this stage the great *Lo tsung nga* (A) or *Zu sho akhu* (B)<sup>3</sup> is held, during which the whole village refrains from work for five days and every man makes offerings of rice-beer in his house to gain the favour of the spirits of the crops for the coming year. This over, the work of clearing the burnt fields and erecting field-houses on them begins, those on the old fields being already up. At the end of the month there is a series of village "gennas" of one day each to preserve the sprouting millet, mark the end of the dyeing season and ward off ill luck which any new bead ornaments may have brought into the village,<sup>4</sup> ending up with one with the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 62

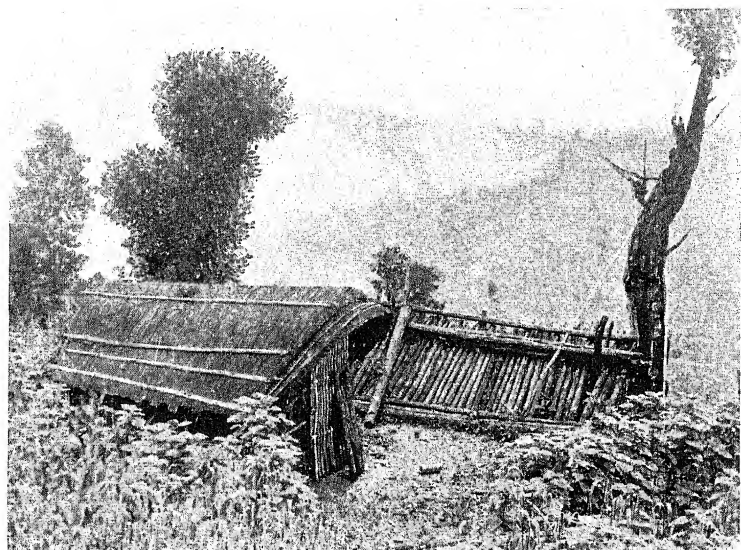
<sup>2</sup> See Balfour, "Some Types of Native Hoes, Naga Hills," *Man*, July 1917

<sup>3</sup> In both languages the words mean "field-clearing ceremony," indicating that after it the clearing of burnt wood from the fields begins

<sup>4</sup> See p. 27



FIELD-HOUSES ON "JHUM": EASTERN RENGMA



FIELD-HOUSE AND PLATFORM: WESTERN RENGMA

*[To face page 80.]*





curious name of "cow's-stomach-opening genna" (*Methi gunda keyi kennu*, A, *Amesu amummung khahapi khamani*, B) It is believed that there are worms in the stomachs of cattle which are liable to escape and damage the seed-grain After this "genna," therefore, no cattle may be killed till sowing is over, and in the Northern villages even the eating of beef brought from elsewhere is prohibited during that time At the beginning of April the "rice-seed-falling genna" (*Tsi che ketsannü*, A, *Keshen teghu kechenna*,<sup>1</sup> B) marks the beginning of sowing, which continues for some four weeks, with a "genna" for rest on the eleventh and twentieth days after sowing In addition, one day's "genna" is observed in the middle of the month to avert hail, of which there is always a risk at this time of year, and another day towards the end of the month to help the young millet, which is well up by now The climbing lentils are also sown this month On the day of sowing the sower and his wife must refrain from speech with strangers, or crickets will nip off the young shoots. The same tabu is observed when "stinking lentils" are sown in July<sup>2</sup> By the beginning of May the first sown rice is beginning to sprout, and a series of "gennas" extending for five days is observed, during which each man makes offerings to the spirits in his fields that the young rice may neither wither in the heat nor be washed out of the ground by heavy storms. The actual offerings are made on the second day On this day no chillies may be eaten, and the man goes very early to his fields, taking with him a small model hoe of the old bamboo type With this he scratches up one or two plants of all the kinds of weed he can find and hangs them over a fire in his field-house, in order that as they wither there other weeds may wither and die on his fields He then blows a little rice-beer from a leaf onto the young rice, in order that it may gain strength and its roots may remain damp. In the middle of the month "gennas" are observed to ward off

<sup>1</sup> Strangers are not allowed in the village on this day If they enter they can be fined later if birds and rats do excessive damage to the crops

<sup>2</sup> The Lhotas have a similar belief, substituting doves for crickets

pests from the crops One insect, called *khyurma* in the Southern group, burrows into the stalks, and is so deadly that it may not even be mentioned in the fields Another grub called *nungshu* (A) or *alu* (B) is such a pest that one day's "genna" observed by the village as a whole is not considered enough In addition to this, any man who is specially troubled with it observes one day's individual "genna," on which he imprisons a grub between two pangolin scales and puts it in his field under a stone On that day he may not eat chillies or speak to strangers Towards the end of the month one day's "genna" is observed for the millet, which is now getting high An egg or, if possible, a badger hair is offered in the millet-field Badgers are decidedly uncommon in the Rengma country, and the story is that the first one ever killed was considered such a strange animal that no one would allow the killer to singe it, preparatory to cooking it, on his land At last he managed to singe it on the land of an old widow who was too feeble to resist To the surprise of everyone her crop was wonderful, and ever afterwards badger hairs have been favourite offerings An alternative is the hair of an animal called *batso* in the Southern group It is excessively rare, and I have never seen one, but apparently it is a kind of water-rat It is said to bring wonderful luck, and tufts of its hair fetch a good price After yet another day's "genna" for pests a day of offerings is observed called *Tsebe lo ro kethu kennu* ("Young rice offerings making genna," A), or *Awuu atsu kutung kechenna* ("Fowls' eggs genna," B) The offerings made in the fields this day must include ginger and two eggs, of which the first is the price of the land paid to the spirits of the fields, and the second the price of their favour for the crops

After this, weeding of the rice crop begins, and everyone is kept busy, apart from "gennas" for pests, unfavourable weather, etc, till early in July Then is held the great eight days' midsummer path-clearing ceremony called *Tele nga* (A) or *Anung kesa akhu* (B)<sup>1</sup> During it there is a

<sup>1</sup> In Kotsenyu the ceremony is called *Telezu akhu* *Tele* and *Telezu* are connected with *Teluu*, one of the Sema terms for the ceremony Semas also call it *Anys* Vide *Sema Nagas*, p 223

great deal of feasting and jollification after long weeks of toil, and the first fruits of the millet are eaten. The paths, on which the jungle has by now begun to encroach, are cleared by field companies, and men begin to think of the approaching days when they will carry the harvest up them. Special attention is paid to the rice-spirit, on which so much depends. She is a woman, and hard to please. At the first of all harvests she was seen sitting in the fork of a tree. Men offered her every kind of gift, but she would not come down and give them her blessing. At last a man, in anger, went below her tree and exposed himself indecently. This broke the ice, and she came down, and has accepted the offerings of men ever since.<sup>1</sup> At this path-clearing ceremony small offerings for her are placed on little model fields which each man scratches on the path. In the Northern villages each man hangs from a stick over his model field a little bundle of bones wrapped in a leaf, and asks all pests to come and wear out their teeth on the bones instead of devouring his crop. Besides the offerings he makes to her, every man sticks up a branch of a certain tree on the edge of the path for the rice-spirit to sit under, and lays three leaf-cups of rice-beer by it for her refreshment. In Northern villages she is not expected to sit on the ground, a seat of the wood of the same tree is made for her, men who have done the mithan sacrifice carving one end of the seat into a rough representation of a hornbill's head. The tree used is *Callicarpa arborea* Roxb (*sāntsu*, A, *techenga*, B, *techcho*, C). It is the tree in which she was first found sitting, and is specially connected with her by all Rengmas. The Eastern Rengmas stick a branch of it in the ground behind the house on the day the clearing of the newly burnt field is finished.

After this brief respite weeding continues till the ears begin to show. From then till harvest the fields have to

<sup>1</sup> Zemi (Kacha Naga) villages of the Pelekuma group make by a path they clear at this time a model of the sexual organs *in situ*. The female organ is exactly modelled in clay, with dry grass representing the pubic hair, while a wooden stake serves for the male organ. Parties of young men and guls going to and from the fields stop by these models, while one of the young men works the stake in an appropriate way, to the great amusement of the rest of the party.

be watched night and day to keep off animals and birds. Pieces of matting are hung up to flap in the wind, and small boys sit on high platforms and shout or pull long strings that work bamboo clappers. Sometimes bull-roarers are used, but they are admittedly borrowed from the Semas, and may not be brought into the village. By the middle of September the earliest-ripening fields are ready for harvest. This is preceded by the ceremony of first-fruits, called *Khong kepeng kennu* ("dish holding genna," A) or *Azi ur ketsa kechenna* ("fields cutting eating genna," B). This ceremony is divided into a public and a private part, and in villages of the Southern group is performed as follows. The First-reaper (*Lophugu*), an old woman, taking a boy with her, goes down in the early morning, without speaking to anyone, to the little patch of first-sown rice. She takes with her cooked rice, rice-beer, meat, crabs,<sup>1</sup> and ashes, which she offers to the spirit of the crops at the place where the rice was first sown. The offerings are laid on *retso* leaves on the ground and carefully enclosed in the sticks, the tops of which are brought together over them, were a wild cat, squirrel, rat or other animal to get at them and eat them, the village crop would be poor. Then the old woman, who has brought with her a sickle and winnowing-fan, cuts a little rice and puts it in her basket. She has to return very slowly, as if her load were very heavy, and must rest at every resting-place. The villagers await her inside the fence. Should she meet anyone on the path by any chance, he must make way for her, for it is unlucky for her to step aside. That night she cooks and eats a little of the new rice. The rest she keeps to eat when harvest is over. Till then she may not leave the village land or enter any house but her own. On the day on which the First-reaper performs this ceremony every householder prepares three leaf-parcels of rice, three parcels of pork with a crab in each, one parcel of ashes, and one small gourd of rice-beer. In the early morning this is put in a carrying-basket, which is hung up in the house by its string. When

<sup>1</sup> Crabs are used in agricultural ceremonies because they live in water that never dries up, and so will cause the supply of rice never to cease.

the man hears that the First-reaper has returned to her house he takes the basket down and makes an offering of food, drink and ashes on *retso* leaves on the floor. The family then eats and drinks the rest of the offerings with an ordinary meal. None of this food may be given to anyone of another clan. The leaves with the offerings on them are finally gathered up and replaced in the carrying-basket till the morning, when they are tied to the centre-post of the house. The next day is "genna" for the whole village. After that each man begins harvest as his crop ripens, finishing his reaping in three, five or nine days, for it would be unlucky to do so in seven or an even number of days.

No musical instruments may be played during harvest, for they would cause a wind to arise and damage the crop, but it is a great time for sports such as jumping and wrestling. Everyone is cheerful, and there is much ragging on the way to the fields and at the resting-places on the path back to the village in the evening. People wear their best clothes and beads, for a gay appearance is believed to please the very feminine spirit of the crops. In reaping, a bunch of rice is held in the left hand, cut off near the head with a sickle (*zangkɪ*, A, *kechɪkɪhəyɪ*, B), and thrown into a basket on the back. It is threshed by being trampled with the feet on a flat space in front of the field-house. The grain and husks are then poured from a basket held above the head and the breeze, aided by a winnowing fan (*ndru*, A, *amagha*, B), allowed to carry the chaff to one side. The clean grain is then piled in the field-house and carried up to the village granary in the evening. The fields in any one block differ so enormously in elevation and aspect that the ripening of the grain extends over a very long time, and harvest is not finished till the middle of November. The harvest-home is celebrated by the whole village with two days' "genna," of which the first is called "Waste genna" (*Kürezo kennu*, A, *Ankapfu khamani*, B) and the second *Che lo kethu kennu* ("Paddy rice-offering genna," A) or *Asu mɪ ketsa kechenna* ("Paddy top-eating genna," B). The first day's "genna" is intended to guard against waste by the housewives of the food so laboriously won. On it everyone

goes out to search the streams for crabs, which again play an important part. A male and female crab are required by each household. Next morning, in the Southern group, the wife, without speaking to anyone, goes to the granary and takes from it a little of the new rice. This she pounds and cooks and eats alone, with the pair of crabs as relish. When this ceremonial meal is over, she goes to the granary again and fetches an ordinary day's supply, which the family eats in cheerful thankfulness. Work is now over for the year, and everyone collects meat and makes preparations for the great *Ngada* ceremony<sup>1</sup> ten days later. In the Northern group the *Asu nr ketsa kechenna* takes place only three days before the *Akfu kesa* festival, which corresponds to the *Ngada* festival of the Southern group. Crabs are eaten with new rice as in the Southern group, and the procedure is the same.<sup>2</sup>

The most striking difference in agricultural methods between the Western and Eastern Rengmas is that the latter depend almost entirely on their irrigated terraces (*akhul* or *akhuzu*) for their rice (*amatha*)<sup>3</sup> supply, using their "jhumms" practically only for millet, maize, etc. The gentle slopes on the banks of the Tizu are admirably adapted for easy terracing. Rough stone-walling is used, but they never attempt to terrace steep hillsides, as do their neighbours the Eastern Angamis, from whom they learnt this method of cultivation. Irrigation is done by channels (*achule*) tapping the small streams falling into the Tizu.

On the "jhumms" maize (*akhuzi*) is a far more important crop than it is in the Western Rengma country. It is both eaten boiled and used for brewing. Ordinarily it is sown scattered among the millet (*achota*), with which it is harvested, but some men grow whole fields of it. Millet<sup>4</sup> is grown both for food and for brewing, but Job's-tears (*ashetha*) is not

<sup>1</sup> See p. 173

<sup>2</sup> See p. 174

<sup>3</sup> In the Northern group of Western Rengmas *husked* rice is called *amatha*.

<sup>4</sup> Millet is not sown by the Eastern Rengmas till May, by which time the crop in the Western Rengma country is two to three feet high. They say it is "unlawful for them to sow till the Angamis have finished sowing." Probably the powerful Angamis imposed this "law" on them from a dislike of seeing them harvest a crop first.

ordinarily eaten. Taro (*api*) is essentially the poor man's food, and its satisfying quality has earned it the nickname of *sewatsu* ("slow belly-filler"). Patches are grown on poor soil. The leaves are eaten as well as the root, but they have to be well dried, or they are very irritating to the throat. The red-leaved millet (*akhrü*) is grown only for drink, and in no great quantities, for, as among the Western Rengmas, no one who has done the buffalo sacrifice or killed big game may touch beer brewed from it. Large crops of the giant millet (*khazi kerami*) are grown, however, for the excellent beer brewed from it can be drunk without restriction. Cotton (*akhakhi*) is an important crop and a special "genna" for it, called *akhakhi kheze khu* ("cotton picking genna"), is held in the first half of November, a few days before the rice harvest begins. On that day the men stay in the village and all the women go down and pick cotton, which they must carry up in cloths, not in baskets. Even on ordinary days men may never carry cotton, though they may pick it. Bottle gourds (*asuza*), red gourds (*achisho*), white gourds (*khurni*) and cucumbers (*amezi*) are grown in patches on the "jhumms". A small quantity of sugar-cane (*ahishe*) is grown in the gardens. It is cut into short lengths and chewed, no attempt being made to press the sugar out. Oil seed, both white (*akhoso*) and black (*mechowu*), and "stinking" (*arhoze*) and climbing lentils (*akharha*) are grown, as by the Western Rengmas. The latter, cooked with salt and chillies, are used as "thirst producers" by men when drinking. The Rengmas never eat them raw, as the Angamis do, believing that to do so causes colds in the head. Ginger (*aso*) and chillies (*seroso*) are planted in patches in the "jhumms" and gardens. Bananas (*angachi*) are grown in considerable quantities near the rice-terraces. Thatching grass (*ih*, A, *ahisi*, B, *ahishu*, C) grows wild in plenty, but, unlike the Western Rengmas, who only stake out claims in stretches of it, the Eastern Rengmas weed and look after patches so that the grass shall be easy to reap, and not all mixed up with jungle. Like the Western Rengmas, they use iron diggers (*amokhu*) on their jhumms, but use only the old bamboo semi-circular hoe (*akheze*), declaring that the iron hoe spoils the



crops The chief "gennas" connected with "jhumming" are as follows *Azikupusa tsenna* marks the beginning of felling After the fields have been burnt and cleared, *Yuyesa tsenna* is held before field-houses (*apro*) are erected The "genna" held before the first sowing of millet is called *Tetsesa tsenna*, and the midsummer path-clearing "genna" is *Rasa tsenna* Early in August there is a series of five "genna" days The first day is called *Atsetatsate*, and is held to prevent waste of food The next four are called *Tsate*, the festival of formal first-fruits that marks the beginning of the maize and millet harvest Young men go to the fields and bring back leaves of millet, which only the women eat, or pretend to eat, raw Men also bring in maize-heads that day These are not eaten that day, but kept till the next day but one following, when everyone eats roasted maize Throughout this "genna" all work ceases and people entertain their friends at drinking-parties

The method of cultivating rice on the irrigated terraces is precisely the same as that obtaining among the Angamis, though Rengmas usually do not sow till the end of April For this there is a "genna" called *Arethu* The village First-sower (*Kachure*), an old man, goes down and sows his own seedling patch without eating or drinking On his return to the village he eats a meal of fish,<sup>1</sup> ginger and rice. The next day the villagers sow their patches By this time all the fields have been dug over, and as soon as rain fills the channels they are puddled The seedlings are transplanted in June There is no village "genna" for this, but each man, before he begins, refrains from work for one day and speaks to no strangers By about the end of October the crop is ripe, and the ceremony of first reaping (*Mathakevnte*) is held for three days, during which the old man who acts as village First-reaper (*Kewntowa*) may drink no beer and may eat only fish, ginger and rice On the first day the old man goes down to his field, fasting before dawn, and begins to reap<sup>2</sup> Later

<sup>1</sup> Fish plays the part in ceremonial meals among the Eastern Rengmas that crabs play among the Western Rengmas

<sup>2</sup> Sickie = *akluwa*, and winnowing-fan = *amara* The former and the big digger used to break up the earth on terraces are invariably bought from Angami villages

other villagers come and finish the work for him. On the second day no one works, and on the third day all begin reaping, but speak to no strangers. In December harvest is over, and the ceremony of first-fruits (*Khathe*) is held. Each householder ties up a pinch of ashes in an *atechi* leaf and puts it in his granary. As among the Western Rengmas, the wife goes to the granary before dawn and brings back a little rice, which she eats alone with fish in silence. The rest of the family begin eating the new rice the next day.

### *Rain-making*

Rain is usually more than ample in Assam, but it is only natural that a tribe entirely dependent on agriculture should have ceremonies designed to bring on the rain should it by any chance be late in the spring. The ceremonies vary considerably from village to village. In Tseminyu a day's "genna," called *Tsung kheri eki kennu* ("sky-falling-asking 'genna'") is kept. The village *Pensengu*<sup>1</sup> with one or two more old men put on rain-shields<sup>2</sup> of the old pattern—no other pattern will do—and go to a certain ditch by which storm-water drains out of the village. There they throw water over one another out of bamboo cups. That done, they plant an indigo plant and offer an egg where the water of the village spring comes out of the ground. In Tesophenyu an old man goes very secretly, with his head covered, to a drain leading out of the village, blocks it with three "panjis" and offers an egg there. The village observes a "genna" called *Atsang kowo kechi khamani*, meaning the same as the Tseminyu "genna." The old man is the only person who can remove the "panjis" and stop the resulting rain, and some years he has a troublesome time, for the same weather never suits everyone in the Naga Hills, any more than it does in England, and some people worry him to take the "panjis" out, and others to leave them in. In Meluri, on the day agreed on for the rain-making ceremony, all

<sup>1</sup> See p. 140

<sup>2</sup> In Western Angami villages of the Kohima group it is the duty of the First-sower to attract rain after the first sowing. For a month he never leaves his house without wearing a rain-cape and rain-hat, however cloudlessly fine the day may be.

remain in their houses with the doors shut, except a party of boys and youths, who go down the path leading to the fields and collect earth in sections of bamboo. They must all leave their body-cloths behind and be stark naked <sup>1</sup> till the end of the ceremony. Coming back to the village, they scatter, all to "khels" other than their own, and throw the earth in handfuls onto the houses, so that it makes a noise as of rain-drops falling, chanting as they do so, "Rain, rain." Then another party of young men bring up branches and stick them up outside the village. The side-shoots are lopped to within a few inches of the stem, and the empty bamboo sections put on them and left. If this ceremony fails, a party of young men fetches water from the Tizu and pours it onto the hollow top of a boulder called *Atsolo* ("sky-stone"), above the village of Yisisu to the east. The Lephori ceremony is simpler. All the boys and unmarried men go down before dawn and build a platform by the side of the path leading to the fields. It is considered disgraceful for anyone to stay behind in the village who ought to go down. On the way back each boy and man cuts a stick and sets it up in the piece of jungle outside the village used as a latrine. None of them may return to the place that day. The village is "genna," and no wild bird or animal may be eaten.

There also exist methods of stopping rain. The Western Rengmas use a shrub called *khashe* (A) or *akhashi* (B), which flowers in the dry weather. A plant of this is cut and stuck up at a place where two roads to the fields fork. This is left there, and if the rain gets too scarce it is pulled up again. It makes a great deal of difference, however, who originally sets it up. Some people are unlucky, and make things even worse. Therefore if the rain gets heavier instead of stopping, it is known that the wrong person set it up, and in these circumstances, too, it is pulled up, lest things go from bad to worse. In Tseminyu another way of stopping rain is to

<sup>1</sup> Nakedness is often connected with ceremonies for rain. The Formosans of old provided an excellent example. Speaking of the dry season, Candidius says, "But they have absolute Power to seize the clothes of whomsoever wears apparel in that three months, when by their Laws they are commanded to go naked, and Pray to their Idols for rain, being about that time always a dry Season." *Atlas Chinensis*, by Arnoldus Montanus, English'd by John Ogilby, 1671, Vol II, p 12

clear the stones and rubbish from all the drains leading out of the village. Meluri seem to know no ceremony. In Lephori the young men set up in the patch of jungle used as a latrine a stake split four square, cross-pieces being fixed in the cracks. They then chant and ask the sky to clear. This is done before dawn.

### *Livestock*

It is only in recent years that Rengmas have begun to keep mithan (*gu*, A, *asi*, B and C) at all. The wandering habits of the animal make it a nuisance. It is always getting into the crops, and also falls an easy prey to tigers. It is, however, fairly prolific. A cow ought to breed regularly every year, producing one calf at a time. The general belief is that she will be ready to be covered again sooner if immediately after she has produced her calf she is fed on cold boiled rice and salt for a few days. Mithan are the essential beasts of sacrifice at the great Feasts of Merit among the Western Rengmas, but only a few are kept, supplies being obtained from the Semas as required. In Lephori alone of the Eastern Rengma villages are a few kept for trade and funeral feasts only. In Meluri none are kept, though it is not regarded as tabu to keep them. In Sahunyu it is absolutely tabu. Among the Eastern Rengmas the buffalo (*sentsung*, A, *ayn*, B, *arrin*, C) takes the place of the mithan, and even in Lephori, where a few mithan are kept, is regarded as the "senior" animal. At the great Eastern Rengma feasts of merit it is buffaloes that are sacrificed, not mithan<sup>1</sup>. The animals live in a semi-feral state in the jungle, and are often very fierce<sup>2</sup>. They are never given salt by their owners, as mithan are, probably because their owners cannot go near them, though the excuse given is that salt would make them fiercer. Fresh supplies of buffaloes are obtained from Burma as required. Among the Western

<sup>1</sup> Dr Hutton is inclined to associate the buffalo with a Mon-Khmer culture and the mithan with a Tibeto Burman. Cf *Ao Nagas*, p 78, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> The Changs, who also keep buffalo, regard it as quite a normal thing for a man to lose his life when a party goes down to round up an old bull.

Rengmas a buffalo is occasionally bought for meat, but the animal is never kept, or killed sacrificially. Cattle (*teuhe* or *matha*, A, *amesu khaweng*—"old-fashioned cattle"—B, *amesu*, C) are kept in large numbers by the Western Rengmas, but only rarely by the Eastern, who find the losses by tigers too great and prefer to buy animals from the Angamis as they want them. Their milk is never drunk, for a Naga thinks it disgusting to drink the milk of any mammal but his mother, but beef rivals pork in popularity. From the end of harvest till the next sowing season cattle are simply turned loose, and may or may not come home at night. When the crops are on the ground they are herded by children or youths and driven up to the village every evening. As soon as a calf is born, the Eastern Rengmas tie a little bamboo clapper round its neck. Among the Western Rengmas the cow is given a particular kind of leaf to eat, and the calf is carried into the house by a man, never by a woman. For the rest of the day the family speak to no strangers, and must eat and drink from platters and cups made from the big leaves of a species of *figus*, because the tree has a milky sap, and the use of its leaves by the family will cause the cow to give her calf a plentiful supply of milk. Should an epidemic break out, each beast is brushed ten times with a bunch of *chandhr* leaves<sup>1</sup> and a prayer is offered that the disease will not attack it. After this simple ceremony, of the efficacy of which I was most sincerely assured, the bunch of leaves is stuck in the wall of the house near the door post.

Mithan-cattle hybrids (*pyeng*, A, *pyangso*, B) are found in all Western Rengma villages, and are valued for the large quantity of meat they give. A few goats (*tenu*, A, *anyntu*, B, *anyntu*, C) are kept in most Western Rengma villages for the sake of their meat. They, however, only eat it in the village, and do not take it down to the fields, and if a goat has kids, the owner stays away from his fields for one day. The destructiveness of the animal is the reason for these prohibitions and for the fact that the Eastern Rengmas do not keep it at all.

<sup>1</sup> These are the leaves which the Lhota calls *orungu* and uses for the ceremonial brushing of his threshing flour. Cf. *Lhota Nagas*, p. 54.

Pigs (*tebwa*, A, *avu*, B and C)<sup>1</sup> swarm everywhere, and are the chief scavengers in and around the village. They keep a sharp watch on the pieces of jungle round the village which are used as latrines, and are most close in their attentions. On the abandoned site of Tsegwenyu Phang below Tseminyu there is said to be a flat-topped stone some four feet high known as *Nishinyu vutseng* ("latrine of the new village"). To answer a call of nature people used to perch on this because of the fierceness of the pigs ranging below. Unpleasant animals though they are in appearance and habit, without them there would be serious epidemics, and they provide the meat the Rengma loves best. They sleep in the house,<sup>2</sup> and are given every evening a mash of rice-husks and leavings. Poor men, who have little rice and have to depend on taro, give their pigs wild tubers. Any long tuber must be cut into short lengths before it is cooked, or the droppings of the pigs will be so long they will never be able to get rid of them cleanly. Fairly well-to-do men give the waste fermented rice to their pigs after the liquor has been drawn off. If the beer was sour and a good deal was left in the rice instead of being drunk, the mash is boiled up again, this is said to prevent it from making the pigs drunk. Pigs become almost pets, and an owner must sell outright the pig he has had longest, he may not eat any of the meat. When a sow farrows, her owner, using a long doubled strip of bark as tongs, picks up and throws away a few straws of her nest. This is regarded as purificatory. He then lifts the piglets and carries them into the house if they were born outside, or lays them down elsewhere if they were born in the house. Boars are castrated at such an amazingly early age that one wonders why the race does not come to an end. The cut is made with a bamboo knife, and after the operation the edges are pinned together with wild lemon thorns, and ashes are rubbed over the wound. The little pig then runs

<sup>1</sup> The pig and the dog are the only animals known with certainty to have been domesticated by the Neolithic jhumming tribes of Northern China. See C. W. Bishop, "The Neolithic Age in Northern China," *Antiquity*, Vol. VII, No. 28, p. 396.

<sup>2</sup> Eastern Rengmas keep newly bought pigs tethered in the house near the fire till they know their masters. This may take anything up to a month.

off quite happily. Dogs are able assistants of pigs in their scavenging operations. All Nagas dock the tails of both sexes and clip the ears of males. In a village bitches always far outnumber dogs, the latter being eaten or otherwise disposed of till only just enough are left to carry on the breed. Foreign dogs got from Kohima or elsewhere have now sadly corrupted the true Naga breed. But the two strains, long-haired (*nynphsu*, A, *aphuwa awawa*—"bird dog"—B, *awashu*, C) and short-haired (*tenhyi*, A, *aphu*, B, *ashu*, C) can still be distinguished. The latter is the better for hunting, the former soon showing lack of drive on a warm day. Bitches are preferred, too, both because they are more obedient than dogs and because they will teach their puppies to hunt. They should not be too long in the leg, as the nearer the ground their noses are the better they hold the scent. Hunting-dogs are given special treatment. The killing of one is punished by exile as homicide is. No woman may step over a hunting-dog lying asleep or hit one with a stick she always uses, though she may use an odd stick or a bit of firewood. When it dies, a hunting-dog is usually buried in a cloth<sup>1</sup>, the owner will never eat the body, though he may occasionally give it away to be cooked. Names for dogs are exceedingly rare, and the only one I have ever been able to discover is *Gungkhing* ("white throat"), used for dogs with white collars in the Tseminyu group of villages.

Fowls (*tero*, A, *awuu*, B, *awr*, C) are plentiful and commonly show a strong strain of jungle-fowl. Indeed, cocks are often only distinguishable from jungle-cocks by the larger size of their combs, and I have known Nagas quite unable to tell whether a dead hen came from a village or the jungle. A hen is often to be seen walking about with a feather pushed through her nostrils and looking very ridiculous. This means that she has pecked one of her chickens to death and is being punished for it. Probably the feather makes hard pecking rather painful. Fowls are

<sup>1</sup> Cf *Sema Nagas*, p. 70. I have seen, in the Konyak village of Longmen, the body of a hunting-dog exposed on a platform exactly as that of a man is.

usually expected to live on what they can pick up, but the nest of a small termite called *teshe* (A) *amukha* (B and C) is often broken up and given to chickens to peck the grubs out. This diet is believed to be specially good for them.

### *Hunting*

All Nagas love hunting, both for the sport it gives them and for the meat it brings, and a petition for success in the chase finds a place in most ceremonial prayers <sup>1</sup> I have known Lhotas refuse to use guns at a tiger hunt on the ground that it would make it less sporting, but I can think of nothing more exciting and risky in the world than the Western Rengma method of hunting elephants (*chung*, A, *asa ketwa*—"big meat"—B, *aru*, C <sup>2</sup>) The expert villages are Phesinyu and Sentenyu, for elephants are common in the low country in which they are situated, but rarely come up to the lands of the higher villages. It is not tabu to use guns, it is simply "not done." The hunter who wishes for renown must depend on his spear alone. Two men go out together, with spears sharpened to a razor edge and protected by sheaths of bamboo spathe. The night before he goes out, the hunter sleeps apart from his wife, and in the morning may speak to no one but his companion and must be careful not to chase pigs and chickens, or the elephants will see him coming, as the pigs and chickens do. Even Baptists observe these precautions before going out, it is not worth taking a risk with a charging bull elephant for the sake of a question of dogma. If the hunters have to press on very fast after the game, they wrap a day's ration of raw rice in leaves and tie it round their waists in their folded cloths. Usually, however, two or three men follow far in the rear with food and rice beer. Communication with these is never by shouting, but always by whistling on sections of thin bamboo, the carriers answering by the same method.

<sup>1</sup> If luck in hunting departs from a village the Western Rengmas observe one day's "genna," called *Phukehe* (A) or *Khamehi* (B). Men must keep entirely apart from women for twenty-four hours. The Eastern Rengmas have no "genna" for hunting.

<sup>2</sup> No elephant has been seen in the Eastern Rengma country in the memory of man, but a tradition of the animal survives.



An elephant is said to take no notice of this. Great attention is paid to the wind, and the selected animal is followed with infinite patience till the supreme moment arrives and the hunter finds himself above it on broken ground over which it cannot charge easily. One well-thrown spear is then enough. The animal plunges off with the blade in its heart, and drops dead within a short distance. Word is sent to the village, and all swarm down to cut up and carry away the meat. The day it is brought into the village is "genna." To stalk and kill an elephant in this way requires a combination of skill, courage and luck that rarely occurs. Even to have one to his credit marks a man out as an exceptional hunter. Of recent hunters Serapu of Sentenyu held the record of three elephants to his own spear<sup>1</sup>. Vyembi, the great tribal hero,<sup>2</sup> included elephant-hunting among his accomplishments, and is reputed to have killed seven. No one, however, has ever equalled the record of Kasinga of Phesinyu, who is said to have killed nine<sup>3</sup>. He died about a hundred years ago, and tradition relates that that year an exceptionally large number of elephants came onto Phesinyu land, as if to see the grave of their brave enemy.

There is no tradition that the rhinoceros (*khunde*, A, *khonyande*, B) was ever hunted by Rengmas, and the Eastern Rengmas have no name for it even. It must have been plentiful in the plains in the old days, however, for shields of its hide were regularly brought up by traders, and were greatly valued for their toughness. A remarkable Rengma belief is that the rhinoceros sleeps on very steep ground and hooks its horn round a tree to avoid slipping downhill. Wild mithan<sup>4</sup> (*teronyungu*, A, *aniza* 's— "spirits' mithan"—B; *asupri*, C) were hunted with spears till Government declared them protected animals. The Western

<sup>1</sup> Serapu died in March 1933. Soon after his death an unusually large number of wild mithan came up from the plains into the Rengma country. It was universally believed throughout the tribe that they came to honour the memory of a mighty hunter.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> The practice of recording bags is a very ancient one. Amenhotep III of Egypt had scarabs issued recording that he killed 102 lions in the tenth year of his reign. Indeed, a "bumper year" for lions!

<sup>4</sup> *Bos gaurus*.

Rengmas, for no valid scientific reason that I know of, divide them into two subspecies, a big and a little. It is tabu to hunt the small kind, for tradition says that the men of Tsoginyu, the village of Vyembi, once hunted one in vain, and very unsportingly laid a curse on anyone who should attempt to succeed where they had failed. The wild buffalo (*tehe sentsung*, A, *aghiza aghul*, B) is known to the Western Rengmas only by repute, and to the Eastern Rengmas not at all. It is practically extinct in the Naga Hills, the last surviving herd in the district being a small one that frequents the flat country between the outer range of the Lhota country and the Diyung river.

Elephant-hunting is a sport in which few can indulge, but there is almost as much excitement to be obtained and sporting risk to be run when the men of a village ring a tiger (*menda*, A, *ametiwa*, B, *amwvu*, C) or leopard (*menzo*, A, *ameti kezowa*, B, *amithu*, C). The two animals are hardly distinguished, and both are mystic beasts, sharing a common ancestry with man.<sup>1</sup> Special ceremonies therefore follow the killing of one, and a man never admits having done so himself, though he will wear the ornaments<sup>2</sup> to which the feat entitles him, which among the Eastern Rengmas are the same as those won by killing a man. A Western Rengma who kills a tiger at a village hunt is never mentioned as having done so, and will not himself boast of his deed. He will merely say, "The village killed a tiger." When a man, in these days of guns, shoots one he says when he comes home, "I have wounded an animal."<sup>3</sup> Both Western and Eastern Rengmas ring tigers and leopards. The Tesophenyu group of villages build a fence and stud the ground with "panjis" after the Lhota fashion,<sup>4</sup> from whom they say they learnt the method a generation ago. The Tseminyu group and the Eastern Rengmas follow the old and far more exciting fashion. The animal is tracked after a kill until it is located in a particular stretch of jungle. The men of the village then ring it, armed with spears and "daos," but without shields, and working strictly in pairs, of which each member

<sup>1</sup> See p. 285

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ao Nagas*, p. 297

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 20, 29, 39

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Lhota Nagas*, p. 66

is sworn to defend his fellow. A line of experienced spear-men get into position below the tiger, and the others drive slowly down in a half-circle, felling the brushwood as they go. Every charge is met with spears, and if the tiger breaks through the circle it is ringed again till it is finished off. The ceremonies that follow the killing of a tiger or leopard differ somewhat among the Western and Eastern Rengmas. Among the Western Rengmas the first spear cuts off the head and carries it home, others following with the body. All eat outside the village, and go straight to the "morungs" as if they were returning from a raid. The first spear is "genna" for ten days, and must avoid bear or dog meat, and eat bamboo pickle and chillies. The carcass of the animal is skinned and the skin used for war-shields, one of these covered with such skin being believed to render the carrier invulnerable. An old custom was to put the head in a stream with the water running into it, as the Angamis do now,<sup>1</sup> so that the animal's spirit could not say who had killed it. Nowadays the head and flayed carcass are put on a platform outside the village, the mouth being wedged open with "panjis" to render the spirit dumb. The ground under the platform is jabbed all over with spear-butts, so that the tiger's ghost shall be unable to count the number of warriors in at the death. The village is "genna" for that day.

Among the Eastern Rengmas the first spear cuts off the head and wedges the mouth open with a piece of wood. He then buries it where the tiger was killed, and places four sticks in the ground so that their ends meet over the grave. No explanation is given of this custom.<sup>2</sup> The rest of the carcass, instead of being brought to the village, is cut up and buried on the spot. The first spear wins a warrior's ornaments, but must eat apart for five days. Probably his ornaments will include a tiger-tooth necklace (*mikha*), if he can buy one. As it is tabu to touch any part of a tiger, he must repeat the five days' "genna" before he can put it on. The men who took part in the ringing do not eat outside the village, and no

<sup>1</sup> See *Angami Nagas*, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> Lephoru do not bury tigers' heads, but keep them in a hollow tree near the village from whence they are taken, to use from time to time in oaths (see p. 151).

general "genna" is observed. Alone of any Rengma village of either section Lephor set a trap, which they call *achokho*, for tigers and leopards. As soon as it is known what path an animal habitually uses, strong "panjis" are set on one side of it, pointing inwards. On the other side a very strong sapling is fixed in position parallel with, and about two feet above, the ground. This is strained back to a catch to which is attached a string stretching across the path. As soon as the tiger touches the string he releases the sapling and is dealt a violent blow, which sweeps him hard onto the "panjis".

After the great cats, the most dangerous animal the Rengma hunter faces is the wild boar (*nyu*, A, *asatsü*, B, *asuchi*, C)<sup>1</sup>. They are not hunted systematically, for their cunning defeats any method, but an attempt is made to kill any chance-met animal. Sometimes dogs out after deer will get on the scent of one. The hunters make no attempt to face it on foot, but climb trees on the line they think it is going to take and try to spear it as it passes. Often, too, they are trapped by a device called *tho khesü* (A), *aküsü* (B), or *aküshü* (C). When an animal is known to come time after time to certain berries or a certain field of rice, a low fence is built across his path, if possible where it runs downhill. He soon loses his suspicion of this, and learns to jump it. When his tracks show that he is doing this, a day is chosen when heavy rain will wash away all human scent, and two very long and strong "panjis" are set pointing towards the fence on the downward side in such a way that the boar, as he lands, will receive one or both of them between the neck and the shoulder. If the trapper is lucky, he will find his game lying dead in the morning. Sows (*nyu*, A, *amangang*, B, *asuchi*,<sup>2</sup> C) and young pig running in sounders are harmless animals and provide good meat. They can

<sup>1</sup> The Western Rengmas say there exists a species of wild pig smaller and fiercer than the ordinary kind, with a white patch on each side of the neck. They call them "Jathung's pigs" and say they are descended from a pig belonging to Jathung which escaped into the jungle. But who Jathung was and where he lived no one knows.

<sup>2</sup> It is noticeable that the Tesophenyu group and Eastern Rengmas have no word to include wild pig of both sexes. Of the Yacham words for sambhur stag and hind (*Äo Nagas*, p. 359).

occasionally be driven up to waiting spearmen, and very rarely the Western Rengmas attempt to ring them, but they have not the wonderful skill of the Aos <sup>1</sup> at this, and there is no record of any big bags ever having been made. The Western Rengmas have a method which is, as far as I know, peculiar to them. The hunter sits up in a tree under which pig come in the evening to feed on the fallen berries. If necessary, he drops a few extra berries as an additional bait. When a pig comes exactly underneath him he throws a spear to which a line is attached, hauling it up again if he misses. It is said that it is possible to throw and miss five or six times without bolting the pig if care is taken not to throw at and frighten the leader of the herd—usually an old sow. While she stays the others will stay.

Sambhur (*teshong*, A, *atukhe*, B, *akhru*, C) and barking deer (*teze*, A, *amishe*, B, *amisu*, C) are the animals most frequently hunted by Nagas. For this the Western Rengmas always use dogs and the Eastern never. When dogs are used, two or three lean, yapping brutes, as keen as mustard, are loosed on the scent and, guided by their noise, spearmen mark the line the animal is taking and cut it off. Great skill is shown in judging where to wait, and a hunt is more often successful than not. After killing sambhur, bear or wild boar a Western Rengma is under certain tabus. On the day of the kill he makes "pita madhu," which he drinks next day with the meat of a small pig and without rice. For two days he cannot go to the fields, and for ten days he must refrain from chillies. Serow (*tenyu*, A, *amozu*, B and C) are occasionally hunted in this way, but they live on bad ground, and are commonly trapped, for they tend to keep to the same paths along the cliffs, and sooner or later a snare will get them. If a hunter happens to hit an animal in the mouth with his spear it is regarded as an evil omen. The meat of the animal can be eaten, but the man who threw the spear will not reckon the kill in his tally of game <sup>2</sup>. For a fair-and-square kill the first spear gets the head and two hind legs and the second spear the off fore and a piece of the rump. The owner of the dogs gets the near fore and the stomach.

<sup>1</sup> See *Ao Nagas*, pp 137-139

<sup>2</sup> Cf *Lhota Nagas*, p. 65

and, if he hunted the dogs himself, the wall of the lower stomach. The rest of the meat is divided up among all who took part in the hunt, the older men receiving the bigger shares. This method of hunting is strenuous enough (I have indulged in it with Aos), but an Eastern Rengma hunt without dogs is far more so. In it men race through jungle following the game or attempting to cut it off. They earn every deer they get. The first spear gets the head and the second the rump, and these two further join in the general sharing out of the rest of the meat, which is divided according to age.

As one would expect in the section of the tribe that uses dogs, an annual ceremony is performed to increase their chances of success. This takes place in January, on the day after the great *Zü kul* ceremony.<sup>1</sup> On that day all owners of hunting-dogs assemble with their dogs at some spot well away from a path and unlikely to be visited by a woman, for her presence would bring ill luck to an essentially male sport. Some water is brought, and the face and paws of each dog are formally washed, and their bodies are brushed ten times with the sevenfold brush used for illness,<sup>2</sup> while the following words are uttered: "Your nose must be keen. If animals come from Japvu Hill you must track them, if animals come from Wokha Hill you must track them, if animals come from the plains you must track them, if animals come from the east you must track them." Then a small chicken is killed and a fire lighted. The chicken must have been seized in the morning without permission from anyone, as if it were a wild bird, though the owner is told in the evening and paid. This is singed and offered by the oldest man present to the spirit of game, ten scraps being placed on *säntsü* leaves to his right hand and nine to his left. Next the omens for the year are taken as follows. The oldest man stands up facing to the east and away from the village and all spears are put into his arms. He suddenly spills them on the ground to his front, and the man whose spear shoots farthest forward will get most game. Finally all pass through the fire, first dogs and then bitches, and then men in order of age. All then go hunting in the jungle.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 174.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 238.

Deer are more rarely snared. Sometimes a fence with "panjis" on the far side is made, as for a wild boar. A commoner method, forbidden under British rule both on account of its great cruelty and of the risk to wandering human beings, was to dig pits in the paths commonly used by deer crossing ridges at the saddles. The pits (*pyeng ketso*, A, *kuchichuwa*, B, *azikri*, C) were deep, and dug so as to end in a point at the bottom, in which "panjis" were stuck. The impaled animals were thus prevented from getting their legs into position for a spring. The favourite sites were near salt licks. Wing fences were built in order to guide the animal down a slope to the pit, on the edge of which a slide of bamboos covered with slippery leaves was made.<sup>1</sup> A man going out to dig or repair a pit could not eat or speak to anyone that morning. If he did he would catch nothing. Among the Eastern Rengmas anyone could make a pit, but the Western Rengmas regarded it as a task fit only for the very poorest.<sup>2</sup> Noose-traps do not seem to have been used by any section of the tribe. Fall-traps are used for porcupines, monkeys,<sup>3</sup> and bears, of which there are two species—the Himalayan bear (*gwemping*, A, *shatawa*, B, *awr*, C) and Malayan bear (*nchung tegwe*, A, *apung tewe*, B, *awr*,<sup>4</sup> C). These traps are set where the animals come to feed. A trail of berries leads under heavy logs weighted with stones, which fall when the animal touches a string. Porcupines (*ntsung*, A, *akhapo*, B, *akhapru*, C) are also hunted with dogs and speared. A porcupine quill may never be stuck in the hair, or the wearer's dark locks will go grey in patches, corresponding to the light and dark bands on the

<sup>1</sup> I have seen similar slides made by the Mros of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

<sup>2</sup> Among the Eastern Angamis, too, only the very poor made pits. Before beginning work a man prayed and apologised, saying he was forced to make a game-pit because he had no rice to eat. But he had to be careful that his prayer was not *too* perfect. If it were, the pit when finished would be invisible even to him, and he would fall into it himself when he went to visit it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The common macaque (*Macacus assamensis*) (*tekhu*, A, *asukhu*, B, *akwiteua* or *arhukhu*, C), and the stump-tailed macaque (*Macacus arctoides*) (*tezong*, A, *asuzen*, B, *arazu*, C) are chiefly sought after on account of the damage they do to crops. The long-tailed *Pithecius brahma* (*tenyu*, A, *atamu*, B, *angu*, C) is not regarded as a pest.

<sup>4</sup> The Eastern Rengmas seem only to know one species, or at least only to use one name.

quill Gibbons (*tepfwong*, A, *asupi*, B, *akhuru*, C) were never killed before guns were introduced, and even now are protected by some villages owing to the belief that they drive off other monkeys likely to damage the crops. Among the Eastern Rengmas all men may eat their flesh, but among the Western Rengmas only old, and so less valuable, men, as the animal flings itself so wildly from branch to branch that it is feared its meat would cause giddiness. No attempt is made to trap wild dogs (*tekheng*, A, *atenyang*, B, *anyukri*, C), destructive though they are to cattle, they are speared only if they are met by chance. For jungle cats, civets and other smaller animals noose-traps (*ndu se*, A, *ahayr*, B, *azi*, C) are set. The noose runs through a bamboo tube, against one end of which the animal's head is jammed hard when the trap is sprung, so that it cannot get at the string and bite it through. For still smaller animals, such as rats, and for ground birds the ordinary triangular Naga traps <sup>1</sup> (*pya*, A, *apetsu*, B and C) are set at openings left in a long, low brushwood fence built to intercept birds and animals moving to and fro between the jungle and the crops. Small noose-traps (*sengkku*, A, *atashang*, B, *sopengvwa*, C) baited with berries are used for birds that keep to the jungle. For small birds that never come to the ground, lime (*chim*, A, *anyi*, B and C) is smeared on twigs, which are put in the trees where they come to feed. Munias (*lotenyu*, A; *awazu*, B, *akütru*, C) come to the ripening rice in flocks, and large numbers are caught by the Western Rengmas (the Eastern Rengmas will not eat them). To bring them to the twigs, hen munias are tethered near. These little decoys are kept in cages for a year or more,<sup>2</sup> and are said to do well provided they are fed and given fresh water every day. Cocks are said to be useless for the purpose. The Eastern Rengma does not seem to pursue the Great Indian Hornbill (*hungtsing*, A, *achü*, B, *arochi*, C) at all, he has little use for its feathers, and his country contains little forest of the type the bird frequents. To the Western Rengma it is the most valuable bird the jungle provides, both for its feathers and its

<sup>1</sup> See Fig. 2 of illustration facing page 88 of *Angami Nagas*.

<sup>2</sup> Munias are also kept as decoys in some Western Angami villages.



meat Yet he holds it in awe, and to snare it is regarded as disgraceful and unbecoming for any but the very poor<sup>1</sup> As if to emphasise how desperate and careless of his fate he is, the snarer, before he leaves his house in the morning, deliberately kicks over his rice-dish and says, "I care nothing for food or drink I only want to catch hornbills"—an unlucky action and unlucky words When he comes home again in the evening and becomes a reasonable man once more, he has to wipe out his words of ill omen, and says before he begins his meal, "After all, we need food and drink" The method of snaring is based on very close observation of the bird's habits Hornbills feed exclusively on fruit and berries Because of their great weight they are always careful to alight on the inner end of a branch and walk outwards Their particular enemy is a kind of weasel that lies in wait in trees for the birds that come to feed on the berries Hornbills keep a sharp lookout for them, and peer in all directions on each side of the branch as they walk along it Nooses are set on each side of the branch in such a way that a bird walking outwards along it and craning its neck from side to side is likely to get its head through one They are made of very thin strips of cane, carefully smoothed so that they will slip instantly and so attached to the branch that they will turn easily on it and prevent the bird getting a direct strain and breaking away When the trapper finds a bird has been caught, he climbs up and despatches it with a wooden club About this the following story is told In the old days hornbill feathers were worth ten baskets of rice each, so that a warrior had to pay thirty baskets for his set of three One day a poor man came to the berry tree on which he had set his nooses and found he had caught nine hornbills and a gibbon, the most wonderful bag ever known. Elated with joy, he climbed the tree and, with a shout of, "You are worth a cow to me," swung his club to kill the first hornbill But he was too excited to aim straight The blow fell on the cane noose and broke it, and the bird flew away Seven more times he did the same, and each time he snapped the cane and released the bird At last he came to

<sup>1</sup> Nowadays hornbills are more often shot than snared

the ninth hornbill, the one with the poorest tail of all. For the last time he lifted his club, but he was so desperate with anger that he fell over backwards on the gibbon, which was held by a snare on the branch below. The gibbon gave a clutch of terror and caught the man's arm, thereby saving his life. The man then recovered himself, let the gibbon go with words of thanks, and carefully and soberly killed the last hornbill, all that remained to him of his wonderful bag.

Snakes are killed at sight, though only the python and cobra are eaten. The Western Rengmas are most particular to cut off the head, lest the snake's spirit say that a woman has killed it. The Eastern Rengmas do not worry about this <sup>1</sup>.

The taking of the nests of hornets and bees is attended with such real risks that it deserves a place under the heading of hunting. Hornets' (*khughu*, A, *amozu*, B, *awe*, C) nests are sought after for the sake of their grubs, which are considered the most delicious of all food. I have often been told that if once I took to eating them I should never be able to give up the habit. Some of the nests are enormous. A Tsemnyu man is said to have found one once that took seven men to carry. They are found as follows. Hornets are very fond of settling on oak trees, where they seem to find certain insects to their liking. These trees are watched and the line of flight of departing hornets is noticed. The Eastern Rengmas tie a little piece of corn-cob sheath round the insects' waists while they are busy feeding,<sup>2</sup> but, for some unexplained reason, the Western Rengmas regard it as tabu to do so. These corn-cob streamers make it far easier to mark the insects down. It is believed that they always cunningly fly beyond their nest and double back to it, to mislead searchers. When the nest is found it is marked

<sup>1</sup> The Western Angamis agree with the Eastern Rengmas, but the Lhotas have the same belief as the Western. The Semas say that unless a snake is beheaded it will come to life and bite someone, and the Eastern Angamis that it will curse the man who killed it and make him ill. There is also an ancient Scottish superstition that a snake's head must be completely smashed and removed to a distance from the body, if this be not done the snake will come to life again. J. G. Campbell, *Superstitions of the Scottish Highlands*, p. 223.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Lhota Nagas*, p. 69.

and preparations are made to take it at night. A man first puts to the entrance a bunch of burning grass at the end of a long stick. This drives back the sentry hornet, which is there even at night. Grass is then heaped over the hole and set alight, to destroy any hornets that may be lurking near. While this is still smouldering a lighted plug of chillies and millet husks is forced into the hole and fanned to drive the fumes well down. This stupefies all insects in the nest, which can be safely dug out. When dividing up the nest among those who have helped to take it, the Western Rengmas always leave a small share for the tiger, "for he is the lord of all things in the jungle."

The nests of bees, which are valued for the honey, are more easily taken. One species, called *khunu* (A), *akhowa anikhu* (B), *akhowa* (C), builds in hollow trees. To stupefy these the Western Rengmas pound up tobacco and a certain jungle leaf and puff the fumes into the hole. The Eastern Rengmas use the pounded pith of reeds in the same way.<sup>1</sup> Another species, called *khuymyo* (A), *temughu* (B), *aweche* (C), suspends the nest under overhanging rocks high up on cliffs or under the branches of trees. The nests on cliffs seem to be regarded by all Rengmas as inaccessible, but those on trees, if fairly low down, the Eastern Rengmas burn out with flaming bunches of grass on the ends of poles. The Western Rengmas fell the tree if it is not too big and seize the nest and bolt.

### *Fishing*

There being no rivers of any size in the Western Rengma country, the inhabitants have not the expert knowledge of fishing that their neighbours,<sup>2</sup> the Lhotas, have, and the only fish they get are from small streams. In community fishing, when large parties go down, two methods are used. In one the stream is dammed, and poison is put in well upstream, the stupefied fish being caught when they flounder to the top. Various poisons are used, the commonest being the root of a creeper (*thuyu*, A, *athuyr*, B) like a wild wisteria,

<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Angamis use pounded chaumugra for the purpose.

<sup>2</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, pp. 70 sqq.

with a light-coloured flower <sup>1</sup> This is pounded with stones till the fibres are shredded and the cells well broken up, and then dipped repeatedly in the water Other poisons are the bark of a tree of the acacia family called *yubing* (A) or *amukhu* (B), or pounded green walnuts (*bongku*, A, *azukha*, B) A more primitive method, which I do not know of elsewhere, is with grass A weir is built across the stream and large quantities of a species of grass with a very long, tough stem are thrown in above it Men then drive down the fish from well upstream till they seek cover in the grass, in which they are at once hopelessly entangled All fish caught by parties are divided among the members strictly according to age There is no one in the nature of a chief in a Rengma village who is entitled to a share even if he does not come down to the stream Fish are also caught by individuals with rod and line Hooks made of old umbrella ribs are much used now, but the old methods have not died out To catch small fish, four or five worms, each threaded on a pig's bristle, are tied in a lump to the end of a short line The angler uses a rod of handy length and keeps a basket ready in his left hand. If he is sufficiently quick, he can lift a small fish that bites hard and drop it into his basket before it lets go For bigger fish, up to six or seven pounds, a thin slip of bamboo is threaded through a long worm and bent into a loop The two ends are then attached to the line When a fish seizes this the edges of the bamboo catch in its teeth, and it can be whipped out of the water onto the bank before it can free them For this a stout rod and line of considerable length are needed

Through the Eastern Rengma country flows the Tizu river, which holds very large fish indeed The main stream is too big for poisoning to be effective, and elaborate drives are the usual method of catching fish When a stretch of water has been selected, long lines of bamboo strips knotted together are stretched across at each end, and from the strips are hung at frequent intervals slats of wood marked with black bars that dangle in the water and twist with the current, frightening the fish into the middle of the stretch Weirs of

<sup>1</sup> Known to the Lhotas as *nvo* See *Lhota Nagas*, p 70

stakes and brushwood are then built at either end, the top weir being at the top end of a stretch of shallow water. Watchers are then posted in trees so that they can see the movements of the fish deep in the water, and the drive begins. Beginning at the lower end, stones with long, white strips of bamboo knotted round them are thrown into the water. The fish move upstream, and, unless desperate, will not break back past the white strips waving in the current. Guided by the watchers in the trees, who report if all the fish have moved up, the men at work build fresh weirs one after the other, holding the fish farther and farther upstream till they flounder in the shallow water and can be caught in bamboo baskets.

In smaller streams, and where the Tizu divides round an island so that one branch can be cut off with weirs, poison is used. The commonest is the bark and root of a thorny creeper (*alyu*) with leaves and flowers like mimosa. The poisons used by the Western Rengmas—the wisteria-like creeper (*athuli*), the acacia bark (*amukhu*), and pounded walnuts (*akhalo*)—are also used, but less frequently. The ownership of places where the Tizu divides and poisoning is possible is vested in various “*khels*” in each village, who guard their valuable rights jealously. The only rod-fishing seems to be with umbrella-rib hooks.

### *Food*

The staple food of the Rengma is rice, of which he eats an immense quantity—if he has it, two pounds of raw grain being the ordinary daily ration for a grown man. He relieves its dullness with a liberal addition of chillies or grated ginger, the Eastern Rengmas being especially partial to the latter, and with it he invariably eats meat or vegetables or both from a separate dish. Ordinarily all food is eaten with the fingers, but an Eastern Rengma, if his hands are even dirtier than usual, will use a small, flat bone spoon (*kutsekhu*). In most Eastern Rengma houses, however, a special bamboo vessel (*akhet tso*—“hand washer”) is kept. This is held between the knees and tipped forward over the hands. If several people are eating together, men are invariably

helped before women. If the meal is being taken in a field, the first helping is given to the oldest man of the owner's clan. Otherwise the oldest present, regardless of his clan, is helped first. Maize-heads and little scraps of meat are occasionally toasted, but boiling is the only ordinary method of cooking known. In the home earthenware pots (or occasionally iron vessels bought in Kohima) are always used, but hunters or raiders cannot encumber themselves with such things and use sections of green bamboo, which withstand the fire long enough for their contents to be cooked. This must have been the only method of cooking possible before the art of pot-making was known. Big animals such as cattle are never skinned before they are cut up, and the hair has to be singed off a joint before it is cooked. Often the skin is cut off and singed and cooked separately. Small animals and plucked birds are singed whole. Nothing is wasted—skin, intestines, everything is boiled and eaten. Though there are many birds and animals which only old people can eat, the Rengma is practically omnivorous, his diet ranging from meat long dead to hornet grubs. Spare meat is hung in the houses to dry in the smoke. Before the drying overtakes the decay the smell is staggering, but the meat soon gets as hard as a brick and keeps indefinitely, chunks being cut off and cooked as required. Even frogs are often eaten dried, as well as fresh, but the Western Rengmas are very careful about a species of large frog (*tsamphentsongtsu*, A, *akhwang*, B) which seems to be unknown to the Eastern Rengmas. They believe its head contains poison, and scrape that portion and wash it thoroughly in sand and water before they eat it either fresh or dried.

Even worse than the smell of bad meat is that of garlic pickle (*hangkhure*, A, *hangkhukhu*, B) as made by the Western Rengmas. Garlic intended for this is sown with the rice. It grows quickly, and can be pulled at the end of May, before the rice is big enough to be damaged by it. The leaves are withered in the sun till they are pliant, and are then either packed tightly in vats with heavy stones over them for ten days or a fortnight, or buried for that time in

pits lined with leaves They are then taken out and dried in the sun, and the smell while the drying is going on is truly awful. Once dried, the leaves will keep for a year or more, and form a much appreciated relish

Salt is a necessity Foreign salt can now be bought in Kohima bazaar, and there is no shortage, but in the old days Rengmas were dependent on the product of the salt wells scattered over the south-east of the district, and the supply was inadequate To make it go further the invariable practice was to pound up and mix with it the very bitter berries of the tree called *tsomho* (A) or *athama* (B and C),<sup>1</sup> and this old custom is still observed when salt is used in offerings Even now a considerable amount of indigenous salt is eaten It is believed to be especially beneficial to invalids and nursing mothers Eastern Rengma villages, too, though they do not manufacture salt, often use the water of salt wells for cooking

Typical food prohibitions are as follows Tigers, leopards and all snakes except the python and cobra are eaten by none Only men may eat python or cobra, and they must do so outside the house The meat is regarded more as a medicine for pains in the stomach than as an ordinary article of diet, and the heart is carefully extracted and thrown away, as it is believed that it will breed young snakes in the eater's stomach Nothing killed by a pig is eaten by anyone Western Rengma women may not eat the meat of any animal killed, or even wounded, by wild dogs The Eastern Rengmas do not observe this prohibition. The nightjar is never eaten, "because it is very light" Monkeys of all kinds are eaten by men, but never by women, they steal from granaries, and the flesh would make the women wasteful of supplies For a similar reason parrots may only be eaten by old men, they are for ever pecking at something, and their meat is liable to make the eater greedy and wasteful of food The serow can be eaten by all but wives of men of the Kenten-nenyu clan This animal is believed to stare up at the sky with its mouth open when a thunderstorm is raging, and for this reason its flesh would make women wasteful of food. What the connection is and why the prohibition extends only

<sup>1</sup> This is the tree of which firesticks are made See p 71

to the wives of one clan are not clear. Bear's meat is prohibited to pregnant Western and all Eastern Rengma women. It is regarded as a very stupid animal, and children of the eater would inherit its stupidity. The elephant is also, strangely enough, regarded as stupid, and its flesh is prohibited to Western Rengma women when pregnant. It is not found in the Eastern Rengma country. Among the Eastern Rengmas only old men eat goat's flesh. All Western Rengmas can eat she-goats, but he-goats may not be eaten by young men or women, their lascivious nature would infect the eater and lead to trouble. Among the things that no women may eat are dogs, flying-squirrels, bamboo rats, otters, hornbills, and pigs' stomachs, though girls who have not grown their hair may eat the last.

Famines are very rare, but when they occur, the jungle provides an ample supply of fairly palatable wild tubers. Two species, one of which is called *ruhuche* (A), *hami* (B), or *arhazo* (C), and the other *tehenyukerhu* (A), *hawi* (B), or *akhwa* (C), are the most appreciated. They have long, trailing stems, but no one on seeing a stem may say he will come back for it later in the day, to do so would cause the famine to be prolonged. Similarly when a famine is declared in a village every man must go and look for tubers. Even if a man happens to be well off and still to have rice in his granaries, he must search for and eat at least one tuber. If he does not, he will become poor. Nor, for the same reason, may he accept one free from anyone. If he does he will be dependent on charity at the end of his life. The tubers are quite good to eat, and men often bring them home when there is no famine. There is no harm in eating them, but no one may remark how good they are. To say this might produce a famine.<sup>1</sup>

### *Drink*

The Rengma differs no wit from the vast majority of mankind in disliking water as a drink. Though he is greatly

<sup>1</sup> Another article of diet on the deliciousness of which comment is forbidden is an insect called *teshong* by the Southern group of Western Rengmas. It lives on dying bamboos, and to praise it would cause bamboos to die, with the resulting plague of rats and bad crops.



put about if for any reason he is deprived of alcohol for a day, he cannot be called a heavy drinker. The great amount of exercise he takes keeps him fit, and it is only the few who for various reasons lead sedentary lives that show the effects of prolonged potations. Distilled spirit is drunk only by those who get it in Kohima bazaar, and rice-beer is the national drink of the tribe. Men, women and children drink it, and a wife who habitually turned out a bad brew would find little favour in her husband's eyes. It is exceedingly nourishing, not only can old men live healthily for years on a diet of rice-beer with little or no solid food in addition, but I have known a baby whose mother died when it was ten days old reared first on diluted rice-beer and then on rice-beer and chewed rice. Rice-beer is of two kinds. One, known in Assamese as "pita madhu" (*zu nye*, A, *azu tsa*, B, *akha tsa*, C), is made from soaked and fermented rice-flour, and the other, called in Assamese "rohi madhu" (*nkuzü*, A, *azü tsü*, B, *ntochü*, C), is made from fermented boiled rice or other grains. The first is the ordinary drink of the Eastern Rengmas, as it is of the Angamis, and the latter of the Western Rengmas, who seem to me to make a more potent brew than any other tribe. On a long round of calls in a village the hospitality of each house has to be enjoyed with great discrimination if anything of anthropological or any other interest is to be remembered at the end.

"Pita madhu" is made as follows. Paddy is soaked in water for a night and then spread out on a mat in the house. In a week or so sprouts half an inch long will have grown. The paddy is then thoroughly dried in the sun and pounded up. It can be kept indefinitely and is used as yeast. To make the liquor, husked rice is soaked in cold water to soften it, and is then pounded up into flour. Absolutely boiling water is poured on it, and it is well mixed to get the lumps out. When it is cool it is poured into a wooden vat, which is filled with cold water. The yeast is then well mixed in and the brew is ready for drinking in three days. This is the ordinary drink of the Eastern Rengmas, who make it well diluted. The Western Rengmas drink a much stronger brew. Its use is entirely confined

to ceremonies at which custom says it must be drunk. It is not liked, and is said to produce an unpleasant type of intoxication which is not relieved by vomiting. The following story of the origin of this drink is related. A man once married a spirit, who always made "pita madhu" for him. He later found her dirty and unsatisfactory, and divorced her. She loved him still, however, and every evening when he came home from the fields he found a pot of "pita madhu" ready for him. In time he tired of solitude and married a mortal, and from that day his supplies of miraculous drink ceased. So he set to and taught his new wife to make it from what he could remember of the recipe of his spirit-wife.

"Rohi madhu" is made in an entirely different way, and from it a rather sweet but not very clean-tasting drink is produced. It is absolutely fitted to the country, however, and is a wonderful reviver on a long, hot climb. The method of manufacture is as follows. The rice or other grain used is cooked as if for eating and is spread out on a mat. In warm weather it is spread out absolutely cold, and in cold weather slightly warm. Yeast, of which there are various kinds, to be described later, is then mixed in. After a few hours the rice is piled on a wooden dish, and in three days it is put into a vat. More and more liquor exudes as time goes on, and in two days in hot weather or a week in cold it is ready for use. The longer the liquor is kept the more potent it becomes, till eventually it turns sour. It can usually be kept for a month, and occasionally for two. Every time the owner wants a drink he plunges a strainer into the mass of rice and bales out the liquor which runs into it. Nobody who has drunk Rengma rice-beer can have failed to notice the swarms of little brown flies (*totsenyu*, A, *totsennyu*, B, *tsotaru*, C) which infest it. One almost has to skim the dead flies off an offered drink. This pest is due to the habit of not using a little fermented rice and throwing it away, but keeping the brew till every drop of liquor has been extracted from it and the (literally) bitter end is reached.

The Eastern Rengmas prefer to beer made from rice that made from the giant red millet (*nyendhru*, A, *akhay*, B,

*khazi kerami*, C), which gives an exceedingly pleasant brew of a reddish colour—in the writer's opinion the best of all Naga drinks. They cultivate this grain extensively for brewing, but the Western Rengmas grow very little, as no one who has killed big game or done the mithan sacrifice may drink beer made from it, it is said to make a man "confused". For the same reason Western Rengmas who have killed big game or done the mithan sacrifice may not drink beer made from the grain of a special millet called *tarho* (A), *akhu* (B), or *akhru* (C). The Eastern Rengmas use it occasionally, but say that it goes to the head quickly, and that if a man is so incautious as to get drunk on it he will have diarrhoea so violently that he will have no time to move from where he is sitting before disaster occurs. Both Western and Eastern Rengmas brew from Job's-tears (*nsha*, A, *ashentha*, B, *ashetha*, C) and millet (*nsu*, A, *asenta*, B, *achota*, C), but Eastern Rengmas alone use maize (*sam-phüruchi*, A, *santapfo*, B, *akhuzi*, C) in any quantities for this purpose.

The quality of "rohi madhu" depends to a great extent on the yeast used. The commonest, and the only kind used by the Eastern Rengmas, is made from a very bitter berry (*khonkesa*, A, *akhaza*, B, *khuzati*, C), obtained from a shrub grown in the fields. The berries are dried and pounded and the powder made into a thin paste and mixed with rice-flour and a little old yeast. The mixture is then divided into cakes which are laid to rise on a tray covered with rice-husks. They are ready in three or four days, and are then dried in the sun. This yeast is considered to make a beer which produces intoxication very quickly, and is particularly popular in the Tesophenyu group of villages, where the inhabitants are definitely of Chaucer's opinion that "the glade nyght ys worth an hevye morowe". A second yeast is made from a shrub like a white poinsettia called *kabrume* (A) or *azamwa* (B), which is common everywhere in the jungle. The root and stem are dried and pounded and used exactly as *khonkesa* is. This is a favourite yeast in the Tseminyu group, and makes a comparatively mild drink. A third yeast is made from the bark of a tree (*songhu*, A;

*achongphu*, B) which grows on the hotter ranges. It is shredded and pounded in the usual way. This is chiefly used in the lower villages, where it grows, and the resulting drink is considered mild and nourishing.

The convenient bamboo provides the Western Rengmas with all their drinking-vessels and the Eastern Rengmas with most of theirs. A section is cut so that a node forms the bottom of the cup, and the brim is neatly shaved round. A cane handle is attached to the side. The Eastern Rengmas, alone among Nagas as far as the writer is aware, have different shaped bamboo cups for men and women. That for the man is called *aohu*, and has an ordinary level rim. That for the women is called *nmzar' aohu*, and has the rim prolonged upwards to a point on the side opposite the handle. No reason is known for this difference, and, curiously enough, it is not forbidden for a man to use a woman's cup and vice versa, though ordinarily each sex keeps to its own, and it is definitely tabu for a woman to drink from the cup of a man of another village. The Western Rengmas can no longer obtain wild mithan horns, but they are greatly prized as drinking-vessels by the Eastern Rengmas, and often have the rim bound with red cane.

In the type of rice-beer known as *roh madhu* a great deal of fermented grain floats to the top and gets in the way of a man drinking. To obviate this the Western Rengmas sink a strainer in the vat before drawing. The Eastern Rengmas, on the other hand, use no strainer, but when drinking liquor on which there is a lot of floating grain use a special deep spoon (*whutsekhu*) made out of a small gourd, using it exactly as we use a soup spoon for a plate of vegetable soup. Other grain sinks to the bottom of the cup, and this is considered particularly tasty, and is never thrown away. The Western Rengma likes a good deal of it with his drink, and fetches it up from the bottom of the cup with a wooden spoon perforated with long slits to let the liquid through and catch only the grain. If he has done the mithan sacrifice, the handle of the spoon is carved with a conventional mithan head. The Eastern Rengma uses only plain, unperforated bamboo spoons for the purpose.

*Medicine*

The Rengmas have no great knowledge of herbal remedies. Wounds, unless severe, are left to get better of themselves—which they miraculously do in spite of the absence of the least effort to keep them clean—and for internal illness a sacrifice is the usual remedy. For grave wounds a poultice of the pounded bark of a shrub called *samtsu* (A) or *atechi* (C) <sup>1</sup> is used, bound on with long leaves called “tiger leaves.” These leaves are so invariably used as bandages that it is believed to bring bad luck to bind them round a limb for fun. Another kind of poultice is made from the inner bark of a tree with white flowers and an irritant sap called *peshe* (A) or *amishe* (B). The Eastern Rengmas use for this purpose the pounded leaves of a shrub called *arela*, but the Western Rengmas seem unaware of its properties. If maggots get into a wound the Eastern Rengmas apply a paste made from the pounded tubers of *amthe kegothema* (“maggot-killer”), a plant with leaves like large ginger leaves, found both wild and in garden plots. Occasionally in the Tesophenyu group a piece of absolutely fresh frog skin is laid over a serious wound and bound tightly in position. It is said that this forms a graft and that the wound heals well. A diet of dog or chicken is considered best for a wounded man, beef and pork being regarded as heating. At certain times of the year the soles of the feet are liable to crack and become very painful. The remedy for this is a poultice of the crushed stem of a white orchid (*sungtsung*, A, *teghuho*, B, *aowshu*, C). Scabies is a common complaint, and for this a lotion is made from pounded berries of a tree like an acacia called *ngyu bing* (A) or *atongpya* (B). This lotion is also a protection against leeches and mosquitoes, and a few berries kept with the housewife’s store of thread will protect it against moths. Other remedies are wormwood shoots pounded in water, walnut skin pounded in water, and the ordinary fish-poison root (*thilyu*, A, *athiyi*, B). The last two are effective, but very painful. For the awful sores caused by coming into contact with the irritating sap of certain forest trees the

<sup>1</sup> The Tesophenyu group say they do not use it

Tseminyu group apply either chewed ginger or pounded *tsombo* berries. The Rengma eats as much as he can when he gets the chance, and next to wounds and cuts, stomach troubles are the commonest complaints. For a dull ache the remedy lies in a purge <sup>1</sup> made from the leaves of a shrub called *mesiheng* (A) or *azupri* (B) found on low ground. Care has to be taken to select a shrub of which caterpillars have eaten the leaves, for it is believed that certain specimens are eaten by nothing, and are deadly poison. The leaves are pounded up with the meat of the small black crab, and cooked and eaten later as required. Another powerful purge is obtained from a tree which grows in a few places in the Western Rengma country and is called *phuho* (A), *apuphu* or *atsangko* (B). It produces small white flowers in June and red berries in the autumn. The berries contain seeds exactly like ticks to look at. One is enough for most people, and three is a stiff dose. The condition of a man who took seven some years ago is still a subject of jest. Angamis come and buy these seeds and retail them in their own territory. For diarrhoea and dysentery the tubers of a creeper called *rhunu* (A), *ahan* (B) or *ashukhi rha* ("monkey creeper," C) are cooked and eaten. The danger of this remedy is that it may, instead of curing, cause a complete stoppage of the bowels and urine, with fatal results. The Western Rengmas also use wild bananas (*kwenshu*, A, *meningakhamuwa*, B) to stop diarrhoea. The Eastern Rengmas mash up cultivated bananas (*angachi*) and rice-flour and make little cakes, which they eat as a remedy. Another remedy is to cook and eat the leaves of a tree called *sonu* (A) or *apyi* (B), and an embrocation from the bark of this useful tree is used for all "blood illness" (*meysi*, A, *amoyi*, B), as rheumatism, sciatica and the like are called, from the belief that they are caused by bad blood accumulating in the muscles and veins. In Tseminyu village a liniment is also made from the leaf of a fern called *tsore*, but the usual remedy throughout the tribe is to remove the bad blood by cupping with a serow horn <sup>2</sup>. There is reason to believe that malaria is

<sup>1</sup> This purge is so violent that a pregnant woman cannot use it.

<sup>2</sup> For method see *Lhoia Nagas*, p. 81.

increasing in the Naga Hills. Certainly it is now a scourge in many places, but the tribes have hardly begun to find remedies for it and only suffer helplessly. The only Rengma medicine I know is the very bitter fruit of the *akhesi* creeper that the Eastern Rengmas pound up with a little chille and drink with hot water. They also drink the juice of limes (*arrushu*) with cold water for colds. To cure a discharge from the ears the husks of the red millet are blown in with a leaf funnel. Toothache which has been caused by eating very bitter fruit can be cured by eating the stem of the wild begonia (*nkonu*, A, *aduwe*, B), which is believed to have received its name last of all plants.<sup>1</sup> Real deep-seated toothache, however, though relieved by chewing tobacco, can only be cured by extracting the tooth. No method is known of removing a back tooth, but to part from a troublesome front tooth is easy. One end of a short length of very thin, strong fibre is tied round the tooth and the other end round a heavy stone. The stone is dropped and out comes the tooth. It is curious that no remedy should be known for leprosy, which, though unknown among the Eastern Rengmas, is fairly common and greatly feared in the Western section of the tribe.<sup>2</sup> All a Rengma leper does is to wash, sacrifice a white fowl, and observe one day's "genna." The disease is believed to be caused by maggots, and when the mourners carry the body of a leper out to burial, all hold burning brands, in case "the mother of the maggots" should fly out and attack one of them. The whole village observes one day's "genna" for a leper's funeral.

Abortion is probably not often practised. There may be some secret drug known only to women, but Western Rengma men only give vague information and Eastern Rengmas none at all. The usual method mentioned is a drink of small, very strong, onions pounded up with warm water. Other drugs said to be used are the strongly aperient berries called *phuko* (A) or *apuphu* (B), the aperient leaves of the shrub

<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Rengmas call this plant *kesira shuto* ("dead men's food") and believe that the dead eat it. They do not use it medicinally.

<sup>2</sup> The Konyaks have a horrible remedy. In 1932 a leper of Longmuen smeared himself all over with the fresh blood of a beheaded enemy in the hope of getting rid of the disease.

called *mesiheng* (A) or *azupi* (B), eaten raw, and the aperient tuber called *rhunu* (A) or *ahani* (B)

### *Drugs*

The only drug used is tobacco (*terhatsu*, A, *teyapsu*, B, *azi*, C), which is grown throughout the tribe. The use of opium, ganja and other noxious drugs is unknown. Tobacco is both chewed and smoked. Plants intended for the former purpose are usually grown in fields where bamboos have been felled and burnt, the size and thickness of the leaves being greatly increased by bamboo ash. The leaves are rolled and rubbed in hot ashes, and then rolled up into balls. They will keep sweet for two or three months. Most adults of both sexes chew, but children are punished if they try to acquire the habit. For smoking, tobacco is grown on any ground. The leaves are spread out on mats, rolled with the feet, and left to dry in the sun. The commonest form of pipe among the Western Rengmas has a pottery or stone bowl and a receptacle for the nicotine water attached to the underside of the bowl, from which a small bamboo tube descends. The receptacle is easily detachable, and is carried in the waist-band when the pipe is finished. Indeed, the real object of smoking is to produce nicotine water. Sips of this are retained in the mouth till the tang has gone out of it, and are then spat out. Pipes of this type are called *maghopohung* (A), *amukhi* (B) or *arhikur* (C). A small pipe (*athukha*, B, *awki*, C) is used by the Tesophenyu group and the Eastern Rengmas, the men of the latter group being very heavy smokers and rarely to be seen without a pipe in their mouths. The bowl and stem are of bamboo, and there is no receptacle for nicotine.

### *Games*

Youths indulge in contests of skill and strength on their way to and from the fields, or during the midday rest. One of these is spear throwing (*kezure*, A, *apfuti kekung*, B, *she shuche*, C). Each of the party sticks up his spear in turn, and the others throw at it. The owner of the target cannot complain if his shaft is split and ruined. This is



most popular at sowing. The Western Rengmas forbid it at harvest lest the spirit of the crops be frightened, but the Eastern Rengmas do not mind.

High jump (*kempweyr*, A, *kūpukeye*, B, *kechur* or *kap-fuch*, C) is sometimes indulged in at sowing time, a cross-piece being put between supports, but the sport is not popular, and no one bothers to wager on it. Long jump (*khokechu*, A, *akhukechu*, B, *rhikuchu* or *ketape*, C) is better fun, for everyone can have as many turns as he likes, and there is no cross-piece to be knocked over as a sign of failure. Jumping-places are made in the village or on the path, but never in the fields. The jumper takes off from a flat stone sloping upwards, and lands on a bed of soft earth. If he falls backwards on landing, the jump does not count. On these competitions men wager drinks and small pieces of meat, or even "daos" and spears. But the heaviest wagers are laid on standing jumps (*khumsuwr*, A, *asatsi kameshu*, B, *kechoke*, C)—indeed, the Tesophenyu name means "leg-of-meat jump." A leaf is stuck on the end of a spear or a reed, and the jumper from a standing position must touch it with both feet at once. Young Nagas are wonderfully expert at this, and a man will kick with both feet together far higher than his own head, and yet not fall when he lands. It is mostly at sowing and harvest that these competitions take place. A man taking a gang of youths down to his field will offer a small leg of pig as a prize. The winner receives this, but all share it when the time comes for eating. In the Tesophenyu group it is a prize and not a leaf which has to be touched by the jumper's feet. A little leaf-bundle of crab, salt and ginger is hung from the top of the reed to be jumped at, and the pig's leg tied on a little lower down. In the Tseminyu group the prize is merely laid out on the ground. Sometimes whole pigs, cloths and spears are wagered. Putting the weight with a stone (*tso kephye*, A, *alung kehechu*, B, *alung kobru*, C) is said by some to have been learnt from the Angamis comparatively recently, and by others to be an ancestral sport. Another sport is wrestling (*kukepe*, A; *kuka amphu*, B, *rupyng*, C). The Eastern Rengmas can indulge in it at any time, but the Western Rengmas do not do so till all the rice

has been reaped, lest the spirit of the rice be frightened. The favourite time is when the harvest is being carried up from the fields. Only the arms are used, and the players take a grip and get a strain rather after the Northumberland-Cumberland style. To trip or catch hold of a leg is a foul. Each contest consists of two rounds, in the first of which the wrestlers have their right arms uppermost and over the shoulder, and in the second their left arms on the shoulder and their right under. Foot races (*kukuhni*, A, *kukuzugeyi*, B) are held by the Western Rengmas only, and the course is always up a steep hill. Someone will stick up a spear or a "dao" at the top, and the first to reach it wins it.

The tug-of-war (*rong kekesü*, A, *ah kekezay*, B, *kaloh khoshalu*, C) is more a ceremony than a sport, for omens are taken from it. Among the Western Rengmas contests are not connected with any "genna," but can take place on any fine moonlight night in the cold weather. Mixed teams of young men and young women from each "khel" pull against one another, using a creeper as a rope. There is a good deal of unfair helping by anyone who will come, for a win means good crops, and if a team is entirely overpowered and dragged into another "khel" it foretells death for one of the losers. For the creeper to break is the most serious of all, indicating deaths on both sides. The Eastern Rengma custom is quite different. Among them a tug-of-war is held only at the *Ngazu* ceremony that opens the agricultural year, and is believed to have a definite effect on the crops. Each "khel" has its own contest, which is formal, after the manner of the Ao tug-of-war.<sup>1</sup> The creeper is cut earlier in the day from the direction in which the new fields will be cleared that year, the cutter uttering a prayer that enemies' heads and game will come to the village, and that *Kwuyunza*, the spirit of the crops, will bless them. In the evening mixed teams of men and women in each "khel" pull on their own creeper. When there is a good strain on it someone cuts it through in the middle, and all the contestants fall over backwards! It is then cut into short lengths, and every boy is given a piece. This distribution is definitely believed to

<sup>1</sup> See *Ao Nagas*, pp 116-118

benefit the crops, but the little boys are under no obligation to keep their lengths of creeper, and usually lose them at once<sup>1</sup> In Lephori on the third day after the creeper tug-of-war a cane tug-of-war is held The place from which the cane is cut does not depend on where fields are going to be cleared, but on where a good long piece can be got When the place has been settled, the young men race down to it in the morning, the first to arrive cutting the cane It is pulled that night, and the contest is continued for two or three nights more if necessary, till the cane breaks Old men then pick it up and examine it—no young man may touch it at this point—and pronounce the omens It is believed that the crops will be best that are owned by the households on the side of the piece of creeper that shows most frayed fibre at the break When this has been seen, the two halves are cut up and distributed as the creeper was

Small boys have other less serious games too A tiger-hunt is a favourite one A party will go out and pretend they are men cutting bamboo shoots for pickling The “tiger” creeps up and charges with a roar, and catches and eats the least swift Sometimes a more elaborate game is arranged, in which nothing is omitted which can add to the realism The “tiger” is swathed in cloths, with strips of bamboo tied round him for stripes and two knots of bamboo string on his forehead for eyes A “pig” also has his part to play A boy goes aside and pretends to ease himself The “pig,” with grunts of excitement, approaches to do its duty as scavenger Unknowingly it passes too near the “tiger,” which springs out on it Squeals and roars rend the air, and the warriors ring the tiger after the manner of grown-ups The battle is long and the casualties many “Mauled” men are rescued and laid on the ground at a safe distance till they can be attended to At last, when everyone is out of breath, the “tiger” is killed Another game is tracking deer A boy mounts a pig’s trotter on a little stick and makes tracks with it on soft ground Other little boys then

<sup>1</sup> The Southern Tangkhuls of Manipur State also have a tug-of-war at the great feast which marks the close of the year After the pulling is over the cane is cut in half as it lies on the ground (Note by Col J Shakespear)

pretend these are the spoor of a deer, and have to follow them up

Among the Western Rengmas little boys play a game in imitation of the fight for the mithan's entrails that takes place at a sacrifice <sup>1</sup> A hole is dug in the ground to represent the mithan's stomach, and leaves are rammed tightly into it for entrails A boy pretends to kill the mithan, and the others fight for the leaves and tear them out of the hole in the ground

Yet another game is hunting One boy is the "deer," and hops along on all fours, followed by one or two "dogs" The others throw spears, made of reed or hedychium, at him Spears and toy shields of bamboo spathe or reeds pinned together with strips of bamboo are also used in mock battles Slight injuries are often caused, but no claim for compensation can be made A quieter game is played with tops (*shu*, A, *aphorung*, B, *aphru*, C) They are pieces of wood cut to the shape of a double cone and spun with a short length of bark string of graded thickness to wind snugly onto the upper cone of the top Two boys spin together and make their tops fight each other on the ground This is forbidden at harvest, for tops cause wind,<sup>2</sup> and wind would damage the ripe ears In most places only boys may play this game, but in Lephori little girls are also allowed to play it When a Western Rengma village is founded, the founder must announce that he can see many children playing this typical game Eastern Rengma boys whirl bullroarers (*aowuprurr*) for amusement, and are not forbidden to do so even when the crops are ripening

The game above all that both boys and girls play, though never together, is with sword beans (*khungyung*, A, *akhwyung*, B, *akhozyoh*, C) <sup>3</sup> The two sections of the tribe play it differently. Western Rengma children put up a row of beans lying one on the other in pairs The players are two or three a side, and each flicks a bean from his left hand with the forefinger of his right, and tries to knock down as many

<sup>1</sup> See p 185

<sup>2</sup> See *Sema Nagas*, p 106

<sup>3</sup> *Entada scandens* See *Angami Nagas*, illustration facing p 103, *Sema Nagas*, p 106, *Ao Nagas*, p 156, *Lhota Nagas*, pp 83 and 84 Parry, *Lakhers*, p 188

pairs as he can. Each wins what he knocks down. This game, too, the Western Rengmas regard as typical, and the founder of a village must declare that he can see many children playing it.<sup>1</sup> Among the Eastern Rengmas only one bean is set up on edge as a target. Each player flicks ten from the ground at it, using in turn the thumb and fingers of each hand. Then each player has to hop from the playing-mark to the target, carrying a bean on the top of his flexed knee. Then he hops carrying one on his instep, and finally he hops carrying one between his feet—a very difficult thing to do indeed. The Western Rengmas play another somewhat similar game with stones (*tsoshu khejong*, A, *anu kehechu*, B). A stone is set up as a mark, and in line with it in pairs the stones of the players not throwing at the moment. The thrower tries to hit the mark or one of the pairs. If he does so he moves back to another mark and throws again. Each player is allowed two misses from each mark. The winner has to take the loser's stones and smash them by throwing them against the ground.

Little girls have no dolls, and the only toys I have ever seen them play with are beautifully platted little grass armlets.

### *Music and Dancing*

The Rengmas possess only three musical instruments, and these are never used to accompany singing or dancing. These three are the Jew's harp (*khung*, A, *atakh*, B and C), the flute (*khul*, A, *apmung*, B, *pilichu*, C), and the trumpet (*methi kekwenghyu khul*—"herdsman's flute"—A, *pondeli*, B, *athuthu*, C). The Jew's harp exactly resembles that used by the Angamis,<sup>2</sup> and is played in the same way. It is of bamboo cut to leave a tongue in the middle which vibrates. It is the only instrument which may be played by women, but neither they nor men play it after they approach middle age. Its use is forbidden during the winter purification ceremony,<sup>3</sup> at sowing and at harvest. The flute is

<sup>1</sup> See p 145

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Angami Nagas*, p 69.

<sup>3</sup> See p 174

played only by young men, and a somewhat different pattern is used by the two sections of the tribe. That of the Western Rengmas is of the Sema type<sup>1</sup>. A piece of thin bamboo with the nodes as near together as possible is selected and a length of about three feet cut from the middle. The final node at the thin end is left closed and all the other nodes are broken through from the thick end. Two circular holes are then burnt, one near each end. The player, usually squatting, closes the open end either with the flat of his right hand or by pushing his forefinger down it, and blows through the hole at that end. The other end he holds with the thumb and first and third fingers of his left hand, stopping the hole with his second finger to give the notes. The tunes are improvised, and are generally understood to be connected with love-making, and the instrument is invariably kept in the "morung," and never in the parents' house<sup>2</sup>. The Eastern Rengma flute is of a different pattern. It consists of a single section of thin bamboo about two feet long, closed by a node at each end. Near each end is a circular hole, either of which is used as a mouth-piece, the tune being produced by stopping the other. Only young men play it, but since the "morung" system is falling into decay, there is no prohibition against keeping it in the house. Trumpets, though occasionally blown in the village, are used almost entirely by herdsmen, who sound a blast at intervals to scare wild animals away from the cattle. This instrument, too, differs in pattern in the two sections of the tribe. The Western Rengma type is identical with the Lhota,<sup>3</sup> and consists of a long tube of light wood from which the pith core has been removed, with a trumpet-shaped piece of gourd at the end. The Eastern Rengma type is much more elaborate. It is about fifty inches long, and consists of short lengths of bamboo of graded diameter fitted into each other and terminating in a thin bamboo mouth-piece at the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Sema Nagas*, p. 57

<sup>2</sup> This is because it is mentally connected with scenes and actions which may on no account be mentioned to the man's mother. To relate his sex life to his parents' house, however remotely, would seem incestuous to a Rengma.

<sup>3</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 85

narrow end and a gourd mouth at the broad end <sup>1</sup> Hardly worthy of the name of musical instruments are the whistles (*khukhuvu*) blown by Eastern Rengma boys They are simply little bamboo tubes stopped by the node at one end, and blown as one blows a key

Rengma songs are chants <sup>2</sup> of the simplest description, and vary according to the occasion Some are prescribed for people working in the fields, some for men and women carrying up the harvest, and some for dancers or men walking in procession, and so on For each occasion there are one or more chants which may never be varied Anything in the nature of a solo is unknown The chants of the Western Rengmas resemble those of the Lhotas, while the Eastern Rengma tunes have more swing in them, and resemble those of the Southern Sangtams and other tribes to the east

The Western Rengmas literally do not dance at all, the nearest approach is a march round in procession in time to a chant The Eastern Rengmas, on the other hand, are fond of the spirited dances called *Yachumi keghile* and *Yetsumi keghile* by the Semas,<sup>3</sup> of which the base is three stamps on the ground with the right foot, followed by a jump forward from the left A dance often concludes with a wild gallop round, after which the dancers divide into two halves and charge backwards and forwards towards each other in a mock fight, stamping and raising clouds of dust

### *Daily Life*

Were a civilised man condemned to live in a Rengma village, the monotony of the daily life would be the worst part of his punishment In the working season, which

<sup>1</sup> I am told this type is occasionally made by Western Rengmas, and is called *phu* in the Tsemnyu group In the Tesophenyu group all trumpets, whether of wood or bamboo, are called *pondels*

<sup>2</sup> The chants sung by Nagas working in the fields or carrying loads vary little in the different tribes The pitch differs, but the intervals are constant In a two-note chant there is a drop of a minor third from the first to the second note, the first note is then repeated, and so on In a three note chant the first two notes are as in a two-note, then there is a drop of a whole tone to the third note, the second note is then repeated, then the first, then the second, and so on

<sup>3</sup> See *Sema Nagas*, p 112

comprises all but a very short period of the year, every day is like the last, except for the idle days when the village is keeping " genna " The wife gets up first, at dawn, and blows up the fire and fetches water from the spring The morning meal is put on to cook, and she pounds rice, while her husband gets up and probably has a sip of rice-beer The Rengma is not one of those foolish people who stay in bed till the last minute and then begin their day with a rush Plenty of time is left for the morning meal, and the couple go off to the fields, calling greetings to all they see leaving the village on the same errand A cold meal is taken down wrapped up in leaves and eaten about midday Work is then resumed till evening, when all climb slowly back to the village probably carrying some firewood so that the journey be not wasted Then come supper and a well-earned drink, and families visit each other and gossip No one stays up late There are no books to read, and no one could read them if there were Soon after nightfall the fires are allowed to die down, and all are quickly asleep

On " genna " days life is more leisurely People do not hurry out of bed, and the day is spent sitting about doing odd jobs and gossiping On such days men may sit up talking and drinking till far into the night, and on festival days, when there is singing and dancing, most people probably do not go to bed at all.



## PART III

### LAWS AND CUSTOMS

#### *Exogamy and Relationship*

A MAN must marry a woman who is neither of his clan nor of a clan linked with his in the same exogamous group  
The table of relationships is given below —

	Western Rengmas, Southern Group	Western Rengmas, Northern Group	Eastern Rengmas
1 Father's father	} <i>avong</i>	<i>apa</i>	<i>am</i> in Meluri
2 Mother's father		( <i>Amu</i> is used for male ancestors on both sides higher than grandfather Elsewhere in the relationship table it means a man of the s p e a k e r ' s mother's clan )	<i>am</i> in Lephori (Elsewhere in the relation- ship table <i>am</i> (or <i>am</i> ) means a man of the s p e a k e r ' s mother's clan older than the speaker )
3. Father's mother	} <i>ashu</i>	<i>aza</i>	<i>ala</i> .
4 Mother's mother		( <i>Ala</i> is used for female ancestors on both sides higher than grandmother )	(Used for all fe- male ancestors on both sides )
5 Father.	<i>apfu</i>	As 1 and 2	<i>apa</i>

	Western Rengmas, Southern Group	Western Rengmas, Northern Group	Eastern Rengmas
6. Mother <sup>1</sup>	<i>avyu</i> This term can be used for all women of the speaker's mother's clan older than, or the same age as, his mother, <i>av y u g i n y u</i> ( " l i t t l e mother " ) being used for younger women of that clan	As 3 and 4 No confusion is said to be caused by the use of the same terms for parents and grandparents	<i>aza</i> .
7 Father's elder brother	<i>ada</i>	<i>apakhe</i>	<i>apachi</i>
8 Father's younger brother	<i>anyo</i> .	<i>apeza</i>	<i>apeza</i>
9(a) Father's elder brother's wife	Addressed as "mother"	Addressed as "mother"	<i>azakhru</i> ( " great mother " )
9(b) Father's younger brother's wife	Addressed as "mother"	Addressed as "mother"	<i>azatsu</i> ( " little mother " )
10 Father's sister	<i>anu</i> (General term for all women who can marry men whom the speaker calls <i>amu</i> , i.e. men of his mother's clan)	<i>enyi</i> (General term for all women who can marry men whom the speaker calls <i>amur</i> , i.e. men of his mother's clan)	<i>enyitsu</i> (General term for a woman of the speaker's clan older than the speaker. A woman who is neither of his nor of his mother's clan is <i>enyi</i> )

<sup>1</sup> For the special terms for "mother," *apsu* (A), *apfu* (B), and *avo* (C) used by certain clans see pp 14 and 15. When these special terms for "mother" are used the derivatives of the words for "mother" are, of course, modified accordingly. For the special words for grandmother, *agu* (A), *azakh* (B) see also pp 14 and 15. The matter is further complicated by the existence of yet another form of address in villages on the outer range. There *apfu* means a parent of either sex, a father being distinguished as *apfu pechehu* and a mother as *apfu tenugu*.

	Western Rengmas, Southern Group	Western Rengmas, Northern Group	Eastern Rengmas.
11 Father's sister's husband	<i>ammu</i> (A special term is used in this group only)	<i>amun</i> (In theory means a man of the s p e a k e r ' s mother's clan, but in practice used for older men of all clans with which his clan can marry)	<i>am</i> in Meluri <i>am</i> in Lephori (Used for all elderly men of the speaker's mother's clan)
12. Mother's brother.	<i>am</i> (In theory means a man of the s p e a k e r ' s mother's clan, but in practice used for older men of all clans into which his clan can marry)	As 11	As 11
13 Mother's brother's wife.	As 10	As 10	As 10 if of s p e a k e r ' s clan. Other- wise <i>eny</i>
14. Mother's elder sister	Addressed as "mother"	<i>azakhe</i>	As 9(a).
15 Mother's younger sister	Addressed as "mother"	Addressed as "mother"	As 9(b)
16 Mother's sister's husband	Addressed as 7 if older than speaker's father, and as 8 if younger		
17 Wife's father	As 12.	As 11	As 11
18 Wife's mother.	As 10	As 10	As 13
19. Husband's father	As 12.	<i>ekhu</i> (The wider term <i>amun</i> (11) is often used)	<i>ekhu</i> The wider term <i>am</i> (11) is often used)
20. Husband's mother	As 10	As 10	As 13
21 Elder brother (M S)	<i>atsa</i>	<i>api</i>	<i>ache</i> in Meluri <i>api</i> in Lephori
22 Younger brother (M S)	<i>a s i k e z u n g u</i> ("the one com- ing after")	<i>echinowa</i>	<i>enu</i> in Meluri, <i>em</i> in Lephori
23 Elder brother (W.S)	As 21	As 21, but name always used in address	As 21

		Western Rengmas, Southern Group	Western Rengmas, Northern Group	Eastern Rengmas.
24	Younger brother (W S)	As 22	As 22, but name always used in address	As 22.
25	Elder sister (M S)	As 21	As 21	As 21
26	Younger sister (M S)	<i>alegi</i>	<i>etsukheguwa</i>	As 22
27	Elder sister (W S)	As 21.	As 21.	As 21
28	Younger sister (W S)	As 26, but name, and never <i>alegi</i> , must be used in address	No term    Name used	As 22
29	Father's brother's son	Addressed as "brother"	Addressed as "brother"	Addressed as "brother"
30	Father's brother's daughter	Addressed as "sister"	Addressed as "sister"	Addressed as "sister"
31	Father's sister's son	<i>achugu</i>	<i>azurwa</i>	<i>azu</i>
32	Father's sister's daughter	As 31, but name ordinarily used in address	As 31	As 31
33	Mother's sister's son	Addressed as "brother"	Addressed as "brother"	If of speaker's clan, <i>echupa</i> , a general term for male contem- poraries of the same clan, if not of speaker's clan, <i>enyupa</i> , a general term for male contem- poraries of other clans
34	Mother's sister's daughter	Addressed as "sister"	Addressed as "sister"	If of speaker's clan, <i>avole</i> , a general term for female contem- poraries of same clan, if not of speaker's clan, <i>enyi</i> (see 10)
35	Mother's brother's son	No term, but addressed as 12 if older than speaker	No term, but addressed as 11 if older than speaker	No term, but addressed as 11 if older than speaker

	Western Rengmas, Southern Group	Western Rengmas, Northern Group	Eastern Rengmas
36 Mother's brother's daughter	No term, but addressed as "mother" if older than speaker	No term, but addressed as "mother" if older than speaker.	No term, but addressed as 9(b)
37 Husband	<i>nyepfu</i> , but "akamenyu" ( "house man") used in ad- dress Never addressed by name	<i>aopa</i> , but "ite- eyo" ("house man") used in address Never addressed by name	<i>avupa</i> , but never used in address A childless wife addresses her husband as "no" ("you") When there are children he is addressed as "nopa" ("your father") even when no chil- dren are present at the time of speaking Never addressed by name
38 Wife	<i>anu</i> , but "hgu" ("that per- son") ordi- narily used	<i>ayupfu</i> , but "iteeyo" ordi- narily used	<i>avuvu</i> "No" and "noza" ("yourmother") are used as "no" and "nopa" in 37
39 Wife's brother	As 35	As 35	<i>enyupa</i>
40 Wife's elder sister	<i>azugi</i> if the speaker's wife is of his mother's clan, other- wise no term and name used	<i>etsu</i> was the old term, but it is obsolete Name used	<i>etsu</i>
41 Wife's younger sister	No term Name used in address	No term Name used in address	<i>azavni</i>
42 Husband's elder brother	As 12	As 11	As 40
43 Husband's younger brother	No term Name used in address	<i>ekhuza</i>	<i>azupa</i>
44(a) Husband's elder sister	No term Name used in address	<i>enyong</i>	<i>enyo</i>
44(b) Husband's younger sister	No term. Name used in address	As 44(a)	As 44(a)

		Western Rengmas, Southern Group		Western Rengmas, Northern Group		Eastern Rengmas
45	Wife's elder sister's husband	<i>asutu</i>		<i>ezu</i>		If a contemporary as 33, if older than speaker as 8, if of speaker's clan, and <i>ekhu</i> (19) if of another clan
46	Wife's younger sister's husband					
47	Husband's elder brother's wife	No special term 10 used if much older than speaker and 27 if a little older Name used if of same age or younger		No special term 27 used if older than speaker, and name if of same age or younger		No special term. 27 used if older than speaker and 28 if younger
48	Husband's younger brother's wife	No term used	Name	No term used	Name	26 or name used
49	Wife's brother's wife	No term used	Name	No term used	Name	No term used
50	Husband's sister's husband					
51	Elder sister's husband (M S)	<i>tamu</i>		<i>etamyua</i>		As 39.
52	Younger sister's husband (M S)					
53	Elder sister's husband (W S)	As 11 if older than speaker, otherwise name		No term used	Name	No term used
54	Younger sister's husband (W S)	No term used	Name	No term used	Name	No term used
55	Elder brother's wife (M S)	No term used	Name	As 40		As 40
56	Younger brother's wife (M S)	<i>amo</i> Used as a general term for wives of men of the speaker's clan younger than the speaker Wives of elder men are addressed by name		<i>etsunyn</i>		As 41

		Western Rengmas, Southern Group		Western Rengmas, Northern Group		Eastern Rengmas
57 Elder brother's wife (W S )	}					
58 Younger brother's wife (W S )		No term used	Name	No term used	Name	No term used
59. Son's wife's parents						
60 Daughter's husband's parents						
61 Son		<i>ashenvu</i>		<i>anga</i> in Teso- <i>phenyu, atsa</i> in Kotsenyu		<i>atsa</i>
62. Daughter.		<i>ashennu</i> <i>khonte</i> (No difference in meaning )	or			As 61
63 Elder brother's son (M S )		As 61	}		}	
64 Elder brother's daughter (M S )		As 62		As 61		
65 Younger brother's son (M S )		As 61.				
66 Younger brother's daughter (M S )		As 62				
67 Elder sister's son (M S ).	}		}		}	As 31
68. Elder sister's daughter (M S )						
69 Younger sister's son (M S )		As 31		As 31.		
70 Younger sister's daughter (M S ).						

	Western Rengmas, Southern Group	Western Rengmas, Northern Group	Eastern Rengmas
71 Elder brother's son (W S )			
72 Elder brother's daughter (W S )			
73 Younger brother's son (W S )			
74 Younger brother's daughter (W S )			
75 Elder sister's son (W S )	No term used	Name	No term used
76 Elder sister's daughter (W S )		Name	As 31
77 Younger sister's son (W S )			
78 Younger sister's daughter (W S )			
79 Wife's brother's son			
80. Wife's brother's daughter			
81 Wife's sister's son			
82 Wife's sister's daughter			
83 Husband's brother's son	No term. used	Name	No term. used.
84 Husband's brother's daughter		Name	No term used
85 Husband's sister's son			Name
86 Husband's sister's daughter			



	Western Rengmas, Southern Group	Western Rengmas, Northern Group	Eastern Rengmas
87 Daughter's husband	As 51, but name ordinarily used nowadays	As 51	<i>etamu</i>
88. Son's wife	As 56 If children are betrothed in infancy parents on both sides address them as "son" and "daughter"	As 56	<i>etsunyr</i> in Meluri, <i>awapu</i> in Lephor
89 Son's son	} As 31	As 31	As 31
90 Son's daughter			
91 Daughter's son			
92 Daughter's daughter			

In the table the descriptive form of the terms has been used. In actual address the possessive pronoun is prefixed, and "my father" becomes *apfū* (A), *iza* (B), *ipa* (C), and so on.

The system of relationship terms is consistent with a former division into two exogamous groups. Though the term *amr* (A), *amur* (B), *amr* (C), for example, strictly means mother's brother, it tends to be employed for all men older than the speaker and not of his clan<sup>1</sup>. Wives and potential wives of such men are *anū* (A), *enyr* (B), *enyr* or *enytsū* (C) unless otherwise related to the speaker, *e.g.* as his mother's sisters, who are regarded as mothers, just as his father's brother's wives are. Thus a wife's father and a husband's mother are *amr*, etc., and *anū*, etc., respectively. Again, a wife's brother (39) and a mother's brother's son (35) are addressed in the same way, save by the Eastern Rengmas, who have a special term for the former, classing him, rather curiously, with a sister's husband, M S, for whom in turn the Western Rengmas have special terms. Again, an elder brother's wife M S (55) is the same as a wife's elder sister (40).

Some points are difficult to explain. For example,

<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Rengmas make a distinction between elderly men of the mother's clan, whom they call *amr*, and elderly men of other clans not their own, whom they call *ekhu*.

*achugü* (A), *azuwa* (B), *azü* (C), meaning father's sister's child (31 and 32), are used by all sections both for sister's child M S (67-70) and for grandchild (89-92), the Eastern Rengmas extending the term *azü* to cover all the children of the speaker's brothers and sisters (63-78). Even more curious are the use in the Tesophenyu group of identical terms for parents and grandparents, and for male great grandparents of the term ordinarily used for elderly men of a clan other than the speaker's. In the Eastern Rengma table the term for elder men of a clan other than the speaker's is used for grandparents and all male ancestors above them.

Descent is in the male line, but the very special privileges due to a mother's brothers may point to matrilineal influence in the past. A mother's brother may on no account be addressed by name, the proper relationship term (*amä*, etc.) must always be used. It is the most awful sin to quarrel with a mother's brother. It is said that long ago a youth died because he did so, and in a dream his father was told that he had only met with the fate he deserved, "because a mother's brother is like a god."<sup>1</sup> A maternal uncle may abuse his nephew or niece as heartily as he likes, but the slightest rudeness in return will entail the illness of the speaker. Further, a mother's brother or, if there are more than one, the eldest of them, can demand any small articles such as spears, "daos," cloths, etc., and they must be given him. It is believed that if a man were to spit on his sister's son the nephew would become very weak and would be ill for two years. A man must not quarrel with his wife's mother's brothers, or a woman with her husband's, a quarrel of this kind will cause the couple to be sterile. Nor may a man quarrel with his wife's father, who is classed with, and often is, his mother's brother. The same prohibition applies to his wife's brothers, or indeed to anyone whom he addresses as *amä*, etc., and is nearly related to him. The use of group terms for relations is very much more than an old custom. They convey to their users a very definite

<sup>1</sup> A Lakher invariably addresses his chief as "maternal uncle" (*papu*), quite regardless of what his actual relationship may be, since this is the most honourable term of address in the language. Parry, *The Lakhers*, pp. 239, 243, 244.

functional meaning. For example, men who address each other as "brother" stand socially to each other in that relationship. They feel themselves to be a closely knit body of contemporaries with a common male ancestry, potential sharers of clan property, and always ready to act together in clan matters. Similarly the word *am* conveys to the speaker's mind a man of a different clan, potentially hostile in a clan quarrel, debarred for ever from co-heirship, and the father of a girl with whom sexual relations are permissible. Or again, a man addresses his brother's children in terms he would use for his own because, in a way we can with difficulty realise, he hardly distinguishes them from his own. His sister's children, on the other hand, are on an entirely different footing, for they belong to a different clan.

#### *Village Government*

Before the British took over their country every Western Rengma village had a chief called *Kokhugu* (A) or *Kekho'ong* (B), with whom were associated as advisers leading men from other clans called *Tsononyu* (A) or *Pa'onga* (B). The office of chief was hereditary in the clan, but not in the family. It did not necessarily pass from father to son, but to the most suitable man in the leading families of the clan. In cases of gross misrule public opinion could even deprive the whole clan of the right. The history of the chieftainship in Tsemnyu is a typical story of what was liable to happen. From the foundation of the village the chieftainship was held for many generations by the Tepinyu clan. They then began to rule so badly that bodies of men left the village and there was a revolution, as the result of which the Khinzonyu clan seized the power. The chief of that clan was cruel and oppressive. It is said that he would assault people for nothing, and insolently display his power by lying full length across the path everyone used going down to the fields. As a result his term of office lasted only seven years, at the end of which he was expelled from office and the chieftainship passed to the Kentennenyu clan. This clan held it for seven generations, at the end of which time the country was annexed. In Tesophenyu the power has always been held

by the Khungza clan of the lower "khel," the present head of which is Ashindu, the son of Etsanthang, the son of Phuyekha, the son of Gwayang, the son of Shokhi, the son of Logushang. When Logushang was *Kekho'ong* the Mhatongza clan of the upper "khel" made a bid for power, and so fierce a feud started that neither side dared go to the fields and leave their old folk and property unguarded. Things were at a deadlock when Logendi of the Kentennyu clan of Tseminyu, the wife of Logushang, thought of a plan. At her suggestion Logushang and his clan, openly and with a great deal of shouting, pretended to go to their fields. The Mhatongza clan were taken in, and really went to their fields, which were right away in the Phiro direction. When they were safely out of the way the Khungza clan returned, looted Mhatongza property, burnt their houses, and killed their sentry Kheheche, a runaway from Therugunyu who had been adopted by the Mhatongza clan. This put an end to Mhatongza claims to the chieftainship, and the two clans, which have a common ancestry, split so completely that they are now beginning to intermarry.

In the old days disobedience to a chief was punished by the destruction of the offender's house. It was the custom for the chiefs of villages to arrange truces and alliances. For instance, when Tseminyu and Tesophenyu, who nurtured, and still nurture, an undying hatred of each other, were the same year "jhuming" land between the two villages, an active war would have been an intolerable nuisance to both sides, so the chiefs would meet and arrange a truce, promising that each would punish anyone who broke it. To cement alliances it was usual for the son of a chief to marry the daughter of a chief of another village, or, if the chief were of his clan, the daughter of one of his councillors of another clan. British rule has put an end to the power of the chiefs, to the great loss of the tribe, and it is probably impossible to revive it. The habit has grown up of rushing to court with every complaint, and the courts have lent far too ready an ear. A chief's power is bound to disappear if the aggrieved party can always appeal to an alien law administered by a magistrate who has the best intentions in the world un-

combined with knowledge of indigenous custom. The result is that nowadays every man in a Rengma village is a good deal better than his neighbour, and every quarrel results in hours of din and shouting, which often end in no decision at all.

The Eastern Rengmas have no memory of anything in the nature of an hereditary chieftainship. They say their villages have always been run by the most influential men. This system still works excellently, and very few cases are ever brought to court. It will survive if courts refuse to hear disputes which ought to be settled in the village.

So much for the secular government of the village. The most important religious official is the *Pensengu* (A), *Kuzisha* (B), or *Kachuwu* (C). He has complete knowledge of the religious system, and his chief duty is to announce "genna" days. This he does before daylight in the morning, when people have not yet begun to scatter to their work, and his voice can be easily heard in the silence. The office is hereditary in certain clans or groups of linked clans, which must be among the clans that took part in the original founding of the village. There is no objection to a widower or cripple holding the office. Among the Western Rengmas he must be an old man, and he may never sleep in another village. The Eastern Rengmas allow the office to be held by a man of middle age, and do not object if he sleeps in another village, but do not allow him to migrate and reside elsewhere. The *Kachuwu* of the Eastern Rengmas is subject to a special rule as regards eating, which is an excellent example not only of sympathetic magic, but also of Naga resistance to ptomaine poisoning. Not only may he never entirely consume the drink in his cup and the food on his plate, but also he may never all his time of office wash these utensils, and each fresh meal must be served on the remains of many old ones! If he breaks this rule the village will starve. It is said that the *Kachuwu* of Meluri once drank all his drink and ate all his food, and awaited the result. That day there was great discomfort in the village, and everyone complained they were hungry, however much they ate. Without telling anyone what he had done, he hurriedly ate

another meal, of which he left a little, and instantly the villagers felt their stomachs comfortably full again as of yore

The Western Rengmas have no official First-sowers, each man sowing when he likes as soon as the necessary ceremonies are over. Among the Eastern Rengmas the first seed is sown on behalf of the whole village by a man called the *Kachure*. He may never migrate, and no one may quarrel with him or steal from him, for if he were offended the crops would fail. All groups of Rengmas have a First-reaper, called *Lophugu* (A), *Azi kewesha* (B), or *Amatha kevtowa* (C). In the Tseminyu group this official is an old woman, and in the other groups an old man. It is said that old men used to be employed in the Tseminyu group, but that it was found that they were apt to be slack about food tabus and so on, and women were appointed in the hope that they would be stricter. In the Western Rengma villages, at any rate, the office is an unpopular one, and is held only by the very poor. In the Tseminyu group the holder must be a chaste widow of a man of a clan entitled to supply a *Pen-sengü*. She may never cross the boundary of the village land. In the Tesophenyu group the holder must be of an inferior clan. Throughout the tribe it is tabu to offend the first-reaper, or even to borrow anything belonging to him (or her) without asking permission. Actually to steal from a first-reaper is so serious that the punishment is exile. The two offices of Toucher of Luck Stones <sup>1</sup> and Burier are found only among the Western Rengmas, among whom only the old and very poor will perform these accursed duties. In the Tseminyu group the Toucher of Luck Stones is called *Tegwo kebogu* or *Repebe kebogu*, for his duty is to move and wash both private luck stones (*tegwo*) and the ones under the head-tree. He begins the breaking down of a "morung" when it has to be rebuilt, and gets a specially large share of the rump of all mithan sacrificed <sup>2</sup>. In the Tesophenyu group this official is called *Avu kehezi* or *Avu kepaowa*, and has no duties except those connected with the stones. The village burier is called *Sigha kethugu* (A) or *Ashizü kechesowa*.

<sup>1</sup> See pp 231 sqq

<sup>2</sup> See p 186

(B) In the Tseminyu group he buries all bodies, including those of people who have died accursed deaths<sup>1</sup> and joins with the *Tegwo kebogü* in sharing the meat from the rump of sacrificed mithan. In the Tesophenyu group he buries only those who die a natural death, clansmen burying the accursed. So distasteful is any contact with him that payments of rice for the duties he has performed are not made direct to him or his wife, but to his daughters or, failing daughters, to his nieces. Among the Eastern Rengmas clansmen are entirely responsible for all funeral arrangements, and there are no village buriers. A very humble class of official found only in Western Rengma villages is that of Fowl's Throat-Cutter (*Tero khügwugü*, A, *Awurü kheh* B). There are four or five in each "khel," and they are old men whose duty it is to attend on clients when asked, and do ceremonies for illness and so on at which fowls have their throats cut. Among the Eastern Rengmas every man is his own priest and performs his own private ceremonies.

### *Property and Inheritance*

Land, the most important form of property, can be held by the individual, family or clan or, among the Eastern Rengmas, by the "khel." No land is held by "morungs," and odd pieces of waste land can only be said to be held by the village in that they do not belong to anyone in particular. Among the Western Rengmas the amount of common clan land is considerable, and tends slowly to increase, as at every division of private land a small quantity—usually a firewood reserve—must be left as common land.<sup>2</sup> For example, if A dies, leaving three sons, B, C and D, the sons divide equally all land bought by him or inherited as his personal property except one or two "jhum" fields or a piece of land reserved for firewood. This piece of land retained as common land remains the common land of the male descendants of A for ever. Similarly, the male heirs of B, C and D will leave pieces of land common when they divide up their fathers'

<sup>1</sup> See p. 221

<sup>2</sup> It is believed that if this were not done, and all the land were apportioned among the heirs, the clan would become extinct.

property As the tribe remains more or less stationary in numbers, lines are continually becoming extinct and their common land accumulating in the hands of collateral descendants of common ancestors These, in turn, may die out and the common land pass to the clan as a whole through failure of precisely known heirs Clan land is allotted for cultivation by agreement among the clansmen The Eastern Rengmas do not have this custom of retaining a piece of land as common at every division All clans, however, own blocks of common land reserved from "jhuming" for the sake of the cane growing on them In addition, the "khels" of a village own blocks of "jhuming" land which they seem to have possessed since the village was founded The rights in this land are common to all inhabitants of the "khel," no matter what their clan may be

The principal of the Rengma rules of inheritance is that all property goes to the male heirs, with the important proviso that a widow is entitled to maintenance from her husband's property till re-marriage or death. The Western and Eastern Rengmas differ widely in their method of disposing of a dead man's house and house-site Among the former, each son as he marries goes off and builds a new house for himself and his bride On the death of the father the widow retains the house and site till her death or re-marriage, but she may not sell it Similarly, she may use all rice, cash and movable property in the house, but may not sell anything, and if she is unduly wasteful the male heirs may restrain her On her death the youngest son inherits the house-site, house and all the contents, except the pounding-table, which goes to the eldest son The Eastern Rengma custom is entirely different Among them when the eldest son marries he brings his wife to his father's house and remains there with her The father, with his wife and remaining children, has to move after the next harvest and build another house<sup>1</sup> The same thing happens at the marriage of each son, till the old couple are eventually

<sup>1</sup> Similarly in Purum (or Mahemai) in Manipur State parents give up their house to their son within a year of his marriage (Note by Col J Shakespear)



established alone. Then, on the death of the man, the widow has a life-interest in the house and movable property, exactly as among the Western Nagas, but on her death the house and contents go to the son, usually the eldest, who performs the death ceremonies of the father. All Rengmas divide land equally among male heirs, the Western Rengmas, as explained above, always leaving a portion common. A widow, however, has the right till re-marriage or death of cultivating enough of her husband's land for her support, and daughters have a similar right to the use of a portion of their father's land till marriage.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a man who is well off will settle land on his daughter for her life. This is particularly common in the case of men who have no sons. In these cases the woman cannot sell the land, which goes to the nearest male heirs of her father on her death. Women in the Eastern Rengma section ordinarily bring with them dowries of land on marriage. Even after his wife's death a man can use this land, but on his death it goes back to his father-in-law's heirs.

Cattle are another form of valuable property. Throughout the tribe they nominally pass to the male heirs, but in fact remain in the possession of the widow. She, however, can only sell an animal if she can prove to the male heirs that it is essential for her maintenance to realise its price, to a share of which they are entitled. Similarly, a male heir can only sell with the consent of the widow, and must pay her part of what he receives. Weapons and male ornaments are shared among the heirs with the exception, among the Western Rengmas,<sup>2</sup> of the valuable beads known as "deo moni."<sup>3</sup> If there are any unmarried sons, these beads go to them in equal shares, the married sons getting none. If all the sons are married, they share them equally. Women's ornaments, of which by far the most valuable are the waist-beads worn by the Western Rengmas,<sup>4</sup> go from mother to daughter, or, failing a daughter, to a son, who will

<sup>1</sup> Orphan girls go and live with their paternal uncles, who support them till marriage and recoup the expense from the marriage price.

<sup>2</sup> The Eastern Rengmas own so few that there is no special rule governing their disposal.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 28

<sup>4</sup> See p. 35

give them to his wife in due time. If a married woman dies without children the ornaments go to her husband, or his heirs if he is dead. Ornaments left by an unmarried girl go back to her father or his heirs.

Nagas of all tribes are very definitely of the opinion that the inheritance of property carries with it the obligation to perform the funeral rites of the deceased. If, therefore, there is an absolute failure of direct heirs, it is the duty of someone belonging to a distant branch of the clan, or even to a linked clan, to perform the funeral ceremonies. He will then inherit whatever the deceased has left. Sometimes a man dies in such absolute poverty <sup>1</sup> that no one, even if there are direct heirs, wishes to go to the expense of providing a proper funeral. In such cases whoever cares to bury the body with the minimum of ceremony takes whatever he can find worth carrying away.

#### *Adoption*

A child which loses its parents simply goes to the house of another man of its clan. This is not regarded as adoption, but as going to the dead father's natural successor in interest. Cases of adoption by which a poor man seeks help from a rich man and calls him "father" are far less common than among the Semas <sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless a well-to-do Western Rengma likes to have half a dozen adopted "sons," and it is regarded as particularly important that he should be attended by a "son" as a sort of gentleman-in-waiting when he takes a field-company <sup>3</sup> down to his fields. To be unattended is regarded as rather undignified. A rich man cannot demand that a poor man who owes him a debt shall become his "son," but if a poor man offers to do so, the offer is usually accepted and the debt wiped off in return for services to be rendered in the future. The adoption of "sons" is a way of displaying wealth from which the "father" gets very little return except self-satisfaction. In return for the work and support of his "sons" he has to provide them with wives, food and land. He cannot even

<sup>1</sup> No one who has not seen the house of a really poor Naga can realise with what few possessions a man can live.

<sup>2</sup> See *Sema Nagas*, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 75, 76.

take the marriage prices of his "son's" daughters, which go to their actual fathers, and can only inherit their property on the failure of all direct heirs. "Sons" adopted in this way enter the clans of their "fathers," and the relationship continues from generation to generation. There is another practice by which a young man, without leaving his clan, will call an elderly man "father" simply out of regard for him. The would-be "son" goes with his friends to the elder man's house on a prearranged day and is there given a spear, a parcel of salt and some meat, and is feasted, together with those with him. Thenceforth the two men will address each other as "father" and "son," and will attend each other's feasts. The "son" may be given a field of the "father's" clan land to cultivate, but neither can inherit the other's property. Among the Western Rengmas a destitute fugitive from another village will be adopted in the ordinary way, but the Eastern Rengmas have a special term, *ikhekari*, for such people, and their position is that of serfs. If, however, an *ikhekari* runs away, his master can only seize the property he leaves behind, he cannot pursue him and bring him back. An *ikhekari* invariably belongs to another village. An Eastern Rengma, if destitute, either goes and lives on the charity of another man in his own village or goes to another village and becomes an *ikhekari*. He never becomes the adopted son of another man in his own village.

#### *Quarrels and Punishments*

Any system by which the parties to a quarrel appear before an arbitrator and each in turn quietly state their case is foreign to all Naga ideas. Indeed, it is abhorrent to them, for everyone, however remotely connected with a dispute, desires to air his views with vehemence, quite regardless of who else may be talking at the time,<sup>1</sup> and no hearing at which both sides have not screamed themselves hoarse is considered a fair one. The noise that arises when a case is taken in a village has to be heard to be believed. A solid mob surrounds the old men, all yelling at the top of their voices, and on the outskirts braves jump in the air with

<sup>1</sup> I have personally known an Eastern Angami air his views on a case with such violent gesticulations that he slipped a muscle in his shoulder.

excitement and challenge opponents to mortal combat. Before British Courts were established the old men in some miraculous way always got order out of this chaos, and arrived at a decision which was in accordance with the general feeling of the village. They often do so even now. A decision having been arrived at, the customary punishment is inflicted. This naturally varies with the crime. For very serious offences, such as homicide and arson, it is the exile of the culprit and the destruction of his house.<sup>1</sup> In destroying a house certain conventions are strictly observed by all Rengmas. The posts are deeply cut and rendered useless, but are not cut right through. Hearthstones are never broken, for the breaker thereof will die. If the owner of the house can manage to remove from it any property before the avengers arrive, property so removed cannot be touched. But, with certain exceptions, all property found in the house is destroyed. The exceptions vary in the two sections of the tribe. The Western Rengmas spare the pounding-table, all rice-beer vats and winnowing-fans, and two cooking-pots, one for rice and one for meat. The Eastern Rengmas spare only the vats and winnowing-fans. They are most particular about the latter, not out of pity for the criminal, but because they believe that anyone cutting a winnowing-fan will die. For this reason the offender, before bolting into the jungle, leaves a winnowing-fan blocking his door, in the hope that one of his enemies will slash at it in the excitement of the moment and come to an untimely end. When the breaking down is over the owner of the house may return from the jungle to view the ruins of his home, and cannot be assaulted or harmed in any way. Unlike most Naga tribes, Rengmas tend to distinguish murder from accidental homicide and to treat cases of the latter more leniently.<sup>2</sup> For example, some years ago, in Tesophenyu,

<sup>1</sup> So disastrous is a fire in a Naga village, with its crowded, thatched houses, that the Angamis used to throw alive into the flames the man who had lighted them, if he had done so deliberately.

<sup>2</sup> This is unusual among Nagas, the Angamis, for example, making practically no distinction. Driberg (*At Home with the Savage*, p. 217) well sums up the usual attitude in the words, "Generally speaking in primitive societies intent is not a matter that concerns the law, which only looks at the disturbance of equilibrium resulting from a rash or criminal act, whether premeditated or not."

one of two friends who had gone out together after a bear speared the other in the back accidentally and killed him. For this the killer was made to live in another village for a year, and a little thatch was taken from his roof to symbolise the breaking down of his house. Ordinarily exile lasts until the relations of the dead man have cooled down enough to say the killer may return. Among the Western Rengmas the killing of a hunting-dog is reckoned as equivalent to killing a man, and is punished accordingly. Malicious wounding is also punished by the destruction of the offender's house, it being tabu to accept a fine when blood has flowed. The Eastern Rengmas inflict the same penalty for abduction of another man's wife, which they distinguish from casual adultery. While the house is being wrecked the guilty couple hide in the jungle, but when it is over they can return, and are regarded as married, the former husband having no further claim.

It is a serious thing if standing jungle is fired, for it will be useless for "jhumming" for some years. For this offence a man is cursed by the village, everyone spitting as they utter his name. This is believed to bring on repeated bouts of illness which will almost inevitably end in death.<sup>1</sup>

Theft, though by no means frequent, is probably the commonest Rengma crime. The stealing of property which cannot easily be guarded is held to be particularly heinous. Granaries, for example, being outside the village, cannot be watched. The Tesophenyu customary fine for theft from a granary is the specially high one of seven fields. The Tseminyu fine used to be three cows, now reduced to Rs 30, as against thirty baskets of rice for an ordinary theft. Petty thefts are usually settled by payment of the equivalent of twice the value of the thing stolen, but habitual thieves are liable to be bound hand and foot and rolled on a bed of stinging leaves. The Eastern Rengmas have the curious custom of never realising fines for theft during the life of the thief, but of taking them from his property when he is dead. The

<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Eastern Angamis curse an unknown thief. In addition, a faggot of brushwood is set up to represent the wretch, and everyone throws bamboo spears at it. In some villages a cat is sacrificed. See, further, *Angami Nagas*, pp 83, 241, 242, and *Sema Nagas*, p 262.

Western Rengmas, on the other hand, realise all fines as soon as they can, either from the offender or his relations, and only fines for adultery and stealing from a granary do not lapse at a man's death. These can either be paid from the marriage price of a daughter or by a son giving himself in adoption to the aggrieved party and making him heir to his property.

Eastern Rengmas usually exact no penalty for sexual connection with an unmarried girl, provided it was not against her will, though parents sometimes demand one. In Western Rengma villages the action taken varies with the circumstances. Many intrigues are winked at, but a father, if he wishes to bring his daughter up strictly, is entitled to a fine of a cow and two spears. For adultery this fine is increased by a pig, but in villages of the Tesophenyu group this would not ordinarily be demanded from a man of the husband's clan<sup>1</sup>. For the permanent abduction of a wife the penalty is, of course, far heavier. In such cases the correspondent has to reimburse the husband the whole of the marriage price paid and pay the ordinary fine for adultery in addition. The Eastern Rengmas, as described above, punish abduction by destroying the offender's house. For casual adultery the penalty varies. In Sahunyu it used to be thirty articles, such as spears, cloths and so on, and is now Rs 16. In Meluri it is as low as Rs 6.

The Western Rengmas regard all fines taken for fornication and adultery as tainted, as it were. For a man to accept them would seem equivalent to selling his wife or daughter. Anything paid is therefore given to the oldest and poorest people in the village. They have to take the animals right away from the village, and kill and cut them up with their own weapons, no one will lend a spear or "dao" for this. The meat is cooked in their own pots, which are broken and thrown away after the meal, together with all uneaten food. No meat may be brought back to the village, and those who have eaten of it must wash before they return. The village has to observe "genna" that day.

<sup>1</sup> See p 44

*Oaths*

The usual Western Rengma oath nowadays is on a tiger's tooth<sup>1</sup>. In theory the swearer ought to produce the tiger's tooth, but in practice nowadays it is a touring officer who takes one out of his despatch-box and hands it to him, for it is usually in cases before him that oaths are taken. On the tiger's tooth the swearer places a few hairs from his own head and a little soil from the village land. He stands in the open air when he swears, for he must be between earth and sky, and swears according to the formula dictated by the village burier or some poor and landless man<sup>2</sup>. The formula varies somewhat, but always the swearer declares that if he swears falsely he will meet a violent end before next harvest, either by being killed by a tiger, or by drowning, or by falling from a cliff, or by a wound from his own spear or "dao," or in some such way. After repeating the formula the swearer bites the tiger's tooth. The following is an actual oath taken before the writer on a tiger's tooth by one Khepfulho of Kotsenyu, who was accused of stealing and cooking Kechangtang's fowl.

<i>He</i>	<i>Kepfulhona</i>	<i>Kechangtang</i>	<i>azı</i>	<i>aruru</i>
I	Kepfulho	Kechangtang	belonging to	fowl
<i>aphu</i>	<i>sa'ala</i>	<i>metsa,</i>	<i>sa'ala</i>	<i>ımpıng</i>
stealing	bringing	did not eat,	bringing	by my hearth
<i>mechi,</i>	<i>ımpıhuwa</i>	<i>mechi,</i>	<i>ıwangphuwa</i>	
did not put,	in my rice pot	did not put,	in my meat pot	
<i>mechi</i>	<i>Hena</i>	<i>nzi</i>	<i>mapıu</i>	
did not put	I	your property	have not stolen	
<i>Nzi</i>	<i>aphuto</i>	<i>akwe</i>	<i>na</i>	
Your property	if I have stolen	tree	from	
<i>chıtılo,</i>	<i>atsı</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>puwelo,</i>
may I fall and be killed,	water	by	I	.may be
				washed away,

<sup>1</sup> In the old days an enemy's skull was often substituted for a tiger's tooth when one was available.

<sup>2</sup> In cases before a magistrate a Rengma interpreter dictates the oath. It is believed that no harm will come to him because he is obeying Government orders in doing so.

<i>ametrwa</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>alo</i>	He	<i>nangsu</i>	<i>azu</i>
a tiger		me	may devour	I	to-day	words
<i>kekhlā</i>	<i>meh</i>	<i>kemetsa</i>	<i>kyesu</i>		<i>azi</i>	<i>we</i>
spoken	if false		this year		field	reaping
<i>metsala</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>kha</i>	<i>'mā</i>		<i>azi</i>	<i>wi</i>
not eating	my	house	outside		earth	in
<i>khamo</i>	<i>wi</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>khesiphanlo</i>			
clay	in	I	may be buried.			

No great notice is taken of oaths in court, but if an oath of this kind is taken in the village all must refrain from work for one day. To avoid the inconvenience of this oaths were sometimes taken in which the tiger's tooth was only named and was not held. In such cases no "genna" day had to be observed by the village. Occasionally a leaf from the head-tree was substituted for the tiger's tooth. The swearer had to pluck it himself, and this was a very terrible oath indeed. A very strong oath, rarely taken, and regarded as stronger than that on a tiger's tooth, is one taken on a piece of wood from a tree called *nahu* (A) or *anyakho* (B). It has bright red flowers, and all the leaves fall in the autumn. It is believed that this oath, if taken falsely, will entail the extinction of the swearer's clan. So full of magic is this wood that no one may burn it, or plant a tree of it in his wood reserve. If an oath has to be sworn on behalf of a whole village in a dispute with another village the old man taking the oath substitutes an oak leaf for the tiger's tooth, because the leaves of that tree all fall in the winter.

Oaths are still so respected by the Eastern Rengmas that they are very rarely taken, and only in the most serious disputes. The swearer has to go to where the bones of a tiger have been buried<sup>1</sup> and dig one up. On this he swears that he and his family will die that month or before next harvest if his words are false.

### *Friendship*

Nagas are a quarrelsome lot, and a man likes to have plenty of people who can be trusted to take his side. A man can

<sup>1</sup> See p. 98



always be sure of the support of his own clan, but naturally tries to form other alliances outside it for his greater protection. This was more necessary in the days before the *Pax Britannica* was established, but even now formal friendships, cemented by gifts, are common in all tribes. A Rengma calls his friend *asingu* (A), *ipfuwa* (B), or *ikezowa* (C). If two men decide to become friends they exchange gifts of clothes, weapons and food. A friendship thus formed descends from generation to generation, though if the parties belong to different villages it is usually regarded as necessary to make a new exchange of gifts each generation. Two friends must send each other special shares of meat at all feasts and help each other throughout life. At death a man's friends play a great part in arranging his funeral, and it is a friend who dances armed in front of the body when it is carried from the house and shouts that he will clear all enemies from the path of the soul.<sup>1</sup> A man does not address a friend's wife by name, but as "wife of my friend". A man addresses a woman friend of another clan as *logwa lenyu* (A), *azwata* (B), or *etsepfu*. No immorality is necessarily implied, and the term would be freely used in front of the woman's husband, but if a girl is so addressed there is more than a hint that a good deal of familiarity is allowed. A most curious custom obtains among the Western, but not the Eastern, Rengmas by which two men, not necessarily unmarried, bind themselves to be the joint friends of the same unmarried girl of another clan. Girls wear in their ears strings of beads with small white discs at the bottom called *nyeshe* (A) or *asüngkhu* (B).<sup>2</sup> The practice is for two men who are friends and who admire the same girl to go to her and ask her permission to call her *nyeshe* (or *asüngkhu*). If she gives her consent the three persons cease altogether to address each other by name, and always use the terms *nyeshe* or *asüngkhu*. It would be going too far to say that the men become the girl's lovers, but it is generally understood that considerable liberties are permitted. A man will take a head or kill a tiger or perform some other deed of valour in honour of the girl, and she must then feast him. Sometimes the names of other beads, such

<sup>1</sup> See p 217.<sup>2</sup> See p 34

as *tughetung* (A) or *chekhetung* (B), the big, white conch-shell beads forming the side pieces of necklaces, or *tuzi* (A) or *anyamphuyi* (B), the red carnelian beads in the middle of necklaces, are used, but friendships in which these names are used are not as binding

Another special form of friendship is that in which two men address each other as *terhe* (A), *asahowa* (B), or *asurharu* (C). They must be of the same clan and are usually of about the same age. Their special duties are to help each other at feasts, such as Feasts of Merit,<sup>1</sup> and in building each other's houses. As the presence of a friend of this type is essential on many ceremonial occasions, each man has at least two, in case one is ill or observing a "genna." On the day of a man's funeral his *terhe* must refrain from all work.

*Aposowu*, a Sema word meaning "equal," is used for "friend" by both groups of the Western Nagas, but the Southern group alone seem to employ other terms of endearment. Among them men may address each other as *yimvogu* or *usongü*, two words for species of small birds, or as *poginyu* ("equal"). Female society is particularly rich in terms of endearment, and women friends will call each other *apogi* ("equal"), *honye* ("white hedyochium"), *lorani* (a kind of leaf), *heponye* (a white flower), *ihpenye* (yellow ground orchis, literally "flowering among thatching grass"), *nyrisong* (a white flower), or *rinyuh* (a flower growing by streams). If two girls are rather dark, they often call each other *khenzongü* ("darkie").

### *Warfare and Head-hunting*

The Western Rengmas say that men first learnt to make war by watching ants raid each others' nests.<sup>2</sup> The Eastern

<sup>1</sup> See p. 184

<sup>2</sup> Semas have the same belief (see *Sema Nagas*, p. 259). The practice of head-hunting is certainly a very old one. There is reason to believe it may have been carried on in Northern China in Neolithic times (C. W. Bishop, "Neolithic Age in Northern China," *Antiquity*, Vol. VII, No. 28, p. 402). It has been held that the present Philippine practice, which is identical with the Naga, was brought to those islands by Indonesian immigrants three to five thousand years ago, the practice of earlier immigrants being to cut off the top of the skull only. (F. and M. Keesing, *Taming Philippine Head-Hunters*, pp. 43 sqq.)

Rengmas have not got this story, but believe that it is lucky for a raiding party to pass a battle of ants on their path

A small, scattered tribe, the Rengmas have never been strong enough to wage wars of aggression on their neighbours. Their fighting has always been in defence or retaliation, and they tell of no great victories. The record number of heads known to have been taken on one raid is twelve by Meluri in an attack on the extinct Southern Sangtam village of Lotizare about thirty years ago, when the raiders surprised and surrounded a party reaping Job's-tears. Till the country was taken over, the Eastern Rengmas had on their west flank powerful Eastern Angami villages always eager for heads or tribute. Even now Angamis are apt to swagger when they wander through their villages. The pressure from the south on the Western Rengmas was even more severe, for the Angamis had large numbers of guns and the Rengmas had none. It says much for the bravery of the tribe that they have survived, even though some of the weak outlying villages, such as Chosinyu, have adopted Angami dress and hair-cut in order to placate their foes. It was the geographical position of these villages that was their undoing. The Nro river, which runs north and south through the Western Rengma country, is unfordable for most of the year, and is nowhere narrow enough for a bridge to be thrown across. The result is that Rengma villages to the west of the Nro have always been exposed to Angami attacks during the rains while cut off from the powerful Rengma villages to the east who could have helped them. The biggest raid known in Rengma history was an attempt by Mozema and six other Angami villages to wipe out the big village of Tseminyu. There are still old men alive who can remember the day. The raid was engineered by Tesophenyu, who persuaded Tophema to act as go-betweens between them and Mozema. Tseminyu and Tesophenyu are far and away the two biggest Western Rengma villages. They are neighbours, and there is no natural boundary between their lands. The result has been bickerings and squabbles from before the memory of man. The big raid by Mozema embittered the feud past all remedy, and it colours all Rengma politics to

this day Even now passions are apt to be inflamed when men of the two villages meet, and no man of one may visit the other without special permission The raid was a treacherous business Mozema and their allies rushed the village when all the men were away in their fields They slaughtered the children and the old people, and then Naga lack of discipline was their undoing They looted the village and got so drunk on the very potent Rengma liquor that when their infuriated foes came swarming back fifty Angami heads were soon taken The fugitives were hunted through the jungle, and the Rengmas claim that another fifty were lost or died of wounds To this day many houses in Tseminyu contain Angami shields captured in this counter-attack Muzzle-loaders, once fired, were useless, and the Rengmas say that the kilts of the Angamis hampered them in the jungle, and their long top-knots were easily seized by pursuers clad only in "lengtas"<sup>1</sup> The Angami prefers to attack an unsuspecting enemy with a force overwhelming in numbers and armaments The worm had turned to such good purpose that Mozema and their allies had no desire to try it again But Tesophenyu did not know this, and Tseminyu gambled on their not knowing it So they worked an ingenious trick on their hereditary enemies One day they exploded a large number of bamboos in fires Tesophenyu fell into the trap Thinking the noise was that of Angami guns again shooting down old men and children, they sent a large party out to collect the heads of fugitives Tseminyu warriors were ready for them in an ambush and it was Tesophenyu heads that were collected This revenge, though pleasing, was inadequate, and Tseminyu began to plan something bigger, but before anything could be done, the country was annexed and all fighting stopped The wound still festers, however Tseminyu quite definitely bear no ill-will at all towards Mozema and their allies, who

<sup>1</sup> Rengmas also say that Angami villages are easy to raid at night, because the men lay aside their kilts and have to fumble for them and put them on before they can come out and defend themselves A Rengma man, on the other hand, takes off nothing at night, and a woman only her outer skirt The old fashion, too, of leaving only a very small tuft of hair on the crown of the head was designed to give enemies little to catch hold of

are regarded as having taken a chance which any Naga village would be glad to get. But against Tesophenyu, who called in others to do their fighting for them, the feeling is very bitter, and Tesophenyu, deliberately desiring to keep the feud alive, throw out suggestions from time to time that they would like to invite Mozema to a feast to celebrate the famous victory. Tseminyu retaliate by hinting at feasts and alliances with the big Lhota villages in the rear of Tesophenyu. All this sounds futile in these days of *Pax Britannica*, but the Naga thinks in terms of generations, and not of years, and while absolutely loyal to us, at the bottom of his heart regards our rule as only a passing episode. Some day, he thinks, the old days will come back and things will be as they were for so very long before.

An ambush is rightly considered a perfectly fair ruse, but real treachery is disliked. On one occasion Tseminyu sent word to a warrior of Tesophenyu called Hangtungwa that his wife's relations wanted to see him. Tekhanga of Tseminyu lay in wait for him and speared him on the path. This so shocked even Tseminyu that Tekhanga was prevented from taking his head. Another trick of the Western Rengmas known also to the Lhotas, was to invite a man to your house, give him a drink from a freshly cut section of bamboo with a sharp rim, and smash it into his mouth when he lifted it to his lips. A quick blow with a "dao" would then finish him. In contrast with episodes of this kind, fights occasionally took place which would not have disgraced the great days of chivalry. If two villages had many outstanding differences to settle they would arrange to fight at a certain place on a certain day. The first village to arrive lighted a fire and sat down to wait. When the enemy arrived they also lighted a fire a short distance away. Then both sides would clear the battle-field of jungle. When this was done the fight began by each side throwing eggs at the other, for the thrower of an egg rid himself of all ill luck and danger of being wounded. There was far more shouting and challenging than real fighting, but edged weapons were used and blood was let. There was no fighting to the last man, however. Honour was satisfied by a very few casualties. On one

occasion Tesophenyu and Tseminyu decided to fight in this way. As soon as Sipungso, a noted warrior of Tesophenyu, was killed, they turned tail, for a Naga village does not depend for its strength on the discipline and high average skill at arms of its inhabitants, but on the powers of a very few "mighty men," and the death of one of these instantly moralises it. On another occasion Tesophenyu put the Lhota village of Phuro to flight with the loss of three heads.

Most fighting, however, was not in this manner. Usually a party of braves would go out either to snatch a head or to loot from a sleeping village or, more commonly, to try to rush the sentries guarding a party working in the fields, and fall on the screaming women as they scattered. The enemy were not invariably killed. By Western Rengma custom if a man called out "Father" to a man aiming a spear at him the spear was not thrown, and the man's life was spared. He was rendered, and was kept as a slave. Eastern Rengmas had a custom by which, if a man saw an enemy in time, he could pluck a bunch of leaves, wave them, and then sit down. A man who did this could not be harmed in any way, and it is said that even neighbouring villages of other tribes respected the convention. A man intending to go on a raid had to remain chaste, lest he should weaken himself, and might not catch up pigs and fowls, lest he became confused and rushed wildly about as they do. While their husbands were away their wives could not spin, or their men could not trip over creepers, and had to remain chaste, or they would be killed or wounded. This was naturally to be avoided if possible, though, unlike some tribes,<sup>1</sup> the Rengmas do not consider a death in war to be disgraceful.

The ceremonial observed when a head was taken differed somewhat among the Western and Eastern Rengmas, and the practice of each can most conveniently be described separately. Among the Western Rengmas a head taken by a party from the Tseminyu group was carried by the killer to the Tesophenyu group; this was done by the oldest man of the war party. The second spear carried the hands and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ao Nagas*, p. 286

feet, if there had been time to cut them off too. An experienced warrior brought up the rear, planting "panjis" as he retreated to hinder pursuit. When within earshot of the village the party burst into song, and everyone swarmed out to meet and congratulate them. In the Tseminyu group the song was called *repekoloikwe*, and consisted of chanting the words *O pfu tsaku*, of which the meaning is unknown, followed by the chorus *aye* chanted by all. This song is still sung when a tiger is killed and brought in. In the Tesophenyu group the song was called *Nongsha shehe* or *Simi shehe*,<sup>1</sup> according to whether the head was that of a Lhota or Sema, the neighbours with which they were usually at war. The tired and thirsty warriors, who had probably run hard, even if they had not fought hard, were refreshed with food and drink outside the village fence, and then went straight to the head-tree, where they chanted a wordless chant. Time being needed to prepare for the ceremony of hanging up the head, it did not take place till the next day. Meanwhile the raiders, being in a sense unclean, could not go to their own houses, and the whole party had to sleep in the "morung" of the killer that night, the head being put on a ledge of the carved centre post. Neither the weapons nor hands of the raiders could be washed<sup>2</sup> and, to avoid touching food with bloodstained hands they had to convey it to their mouths with a special stiff leaf called *terrhu chen nu*—"enemy spoon leaf"—(A)<sup>3</sup>. Next day a pig and a dog were sacrificed, and shared by all who had taken part in the raid, and the head was taken to the head-tree with much chanting and hung from it in the presence of the whole village. To hang it up a stick was driven through it from side to side behind the temples. This was done with the village "hammer stone"<sup>4</sup> by a

<sup>1</sup> These are not the proper Rengma words for the tribes. *Simi* is what the Sema call themselves and *Nongsha* may be a corruption of *Kyon*, the Lhota word for themselves.

<sup>2</sup> The Ilongots of the Philippines may not wash the blood off arms, body and legs after a head-hunting raid. See Savage Landor, *Gems of the East*, Vol II, p. 330.

<sup>3</sup> The Tesophenyu group used the *chongowa* leaf for this, but had no special name for a spoon made of it.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 231.

warrior of note who had taken two or three heads. A cane string was attached to each end of the stick, and the two ends were tied to a long string hanging from a bamboo set to lean against one of the branches of the head-tree. Pieces of a red flower called *khingdronyu* (A) or *alakha* (B) were hung from the dead ears. If more than one village joined in a raid and only one head was taken, which had to be shared, Tseminyu used to put the piece in a basket, or skewer it onto a piece of tree-fern stem, the fibre of which looks rather like human hair. This was hung up as if it were a whole head. Tesophenyu made more elaborate arrangements. They carved a wooden head, with eyes of iridescent beetle carapace and a piece of goatskin for a wig, and hung it in the centre of a rod, with bits of real human head, each wrapped in three leaves, at either end.<sup>1</sup> When the head had been hung up, an old warrior of note addressed to it the following prayer that other heads might soon hang beside it: "May those who do not obey their parents come and seek for you here. May rich men of your village, may rich men of other villages, may wicked men, may proud men come and seek you."<sup>2</sup> In order to make the most of the occasion, parents took the opportunity of bringing their children to the ceremony and telling them that that was what would happen to their heads if they were naughty. The whole village was "genna" for five days, which were spent feasting and rejoicing, and for ten days the raiders slept apart from their wives and used separate hearths. If they did not do this it was believed they would never get heads again. When the string rotted and the head fell, it was picked up by the village burier and put in a crevice of the bole of the head-tree. The remains of such a head are still to be seen in the Phesinyu tree, but the villagers have forgotten from what village it was taken.

Eastern Rengmas who took a head used to carry it to their village singing a song called *ariza*, which was very like

<sup>1</sup> In Yacham, the only Ao village still independent, a carved wooden head is hung up in a "morung" when it is rebuilt, and remains there till a real head has been taken.

<sup>2</sup> In Formosa too an enemy's head is asked to bring others of its village to be killed (McKay, *From Far Formosa*, p. 273).



the Sema *Yemusale* song<sup>1</sup> The head was carried by the first spear and the hands and feet by the second On arrival at the gate, the party waited outside while the oldest man of the village was sent for to greet them and direct the ceremonies. The head was laid on the ground, and each of the raiders threw leaves and sprigs of wormwood onto it, saying, "Your relations care for you no more" This was probably to induce the soul of the dead man, which resided in the head, to sever all connection with his own village and join the souls attached to that of the raiders The head was then carried into the village to a chant called *ketarrha kuttsi*, and was hung up in a basket on the verandah of the "morung" of the killer Any boy the helices of whose ears had not been pierced speared it with a bamboo spear, and his ears were pierced that day. After the head had been hung up the raiders dispersed to their houses, each man washing outside before he entered, in order to remove the uncleanness which the killing had brought upon him. Bloody weapons, however, could not be washed till next day A meal was eaten in the house<sup>2</sup> and the party slept in "morungs" that night Next day each of the party sacrificed a pig, and the men of the village, in full dress, took the head to the place where it was to be exhibited There the taker put it on a sharp stake pushed up through the neck The hands and feet were similarly exposed on stakes These stakes were set up outside the village on one of the paths leading to the fields. The path selected varied each year, as it had to be one leading to "jhum" actually under cultivation, a custom which shows beyond a shadow of doubt the close connection between head-hunting and fertility<sup>3</sup>

In the case of most Naga tribes it is only by inference that we learn that the underlying idea of head-hunting

<sup>1</sup> See *Sema Nagas*, p 115

<sup>2</sup> Though the warriors had washed their hands they could not touch their food with their fingers that day, and had to convey it to their mouths with *arunga* leaves

<sup>3</sup> Mills (*Report on the Province of Assam*, p cxlv) provides even more striking evidence of the connection He says that it is a very common practice of Lhotas to cut off the heads, hands and feet of any stranger and stick them up in their fields to ensure a good crop, and that the Angamis also do this, but less frequently In both tribes the custom is now obsolete and forgotten

is to increase the fertility of the killer's village by adding to its store soul-force obtained in this way from another village. The Rengma, on the other hand, says bluntly and openly that enemies' heads cause the crops to flourish and men and animals to increase. They therefore feel enemies' heads to be a real need, and believe that they suffer if they lack them. In 1933, with very few years of enforced peace behind them, Meluri begged me to allow them to raid "just a little," or, failing that, to take all my transport coolies from their village the next time I took a punitive column across the frontier, in the hope of some killing from which they might benefit. Western Rengmas have in the past, before their country was taken over, indulged in human sacrifice at times when they have been unable to obtain heads in war. Tesophenyu tell of three persons bought for the purpose. A female slave and her daughter were bought from Lhotas and kept for a long time. They, however, very wisely, called their buyer "father," and so perforce became his adopted children. They therefore could not be sacrificed in Tesophenyu, and, to avoid financial loss, were sold to Angamis, who doubtless killed them. Later a man was bought, but inconsiderately died before he could be sacrificed. Tseminyu were more successful. On one occasion they captured an Angami from Tophema, and kept him till the young rice began to sprout, and his fertilising influence would be most valuable. Then he was killed and his head, hands and feet were hung from the head-tree, as if they were those of an enemy killed in war. There was no one whose duty it was to bury the trunk, so it was taken by the village burier and stuck in a fork of a tree outside the village. But the sacrifice did not turn out well. The wretched victim in his death agony swept the ground with his hand, and this caused the crops to be damaged by wind that year.

Though, as was only natural, when two villages were at war each hated the other heartily, this hatred was not extended to women from the enemies' village who were married to men in the haters' village. Such marriages were quite common, and a woman would be allowed to go and visit her parents even though her husband was at war with

them. She took two or three men of her husband's village with her, and all carried bunches of leaves. While in hostile territory they were sacrosanct, and did a hot-head of the woman's village kill or wound one of her escort, his village immediately demolished his house as a punishment. Even apart from these visits, villages at war were not entirely cut off from all communication with each other. In every village there were men called *kamihonyu*—"middlemen" (A), *anuzi* (B), or *kururu* (C), who, provided they carried bunches of leaves, could visit a hostile village in safety to arrange terms of peace or for any similar purpose. It was more usual, however, to get a neutral village to act as intermediary.

### *Slavery*

The Eastern Rengmas have repeatedly assured me that they never owned slaves. This is probably true. The tribe is weak and poor and unlikely to have been able to buy slaves from their more powerful neighbours. A few were owned by the Western Rengmas before their country was administered, and were called *menrugetenyu* (A) or *itsakesa* (B). No Rengma ever seems to have been bought by his fellow tribesman as a slave, and Lhotas appear to have provided almost all there were.<sup>1</sup> The Lhotas used to leave marriage prices unpaid for years, and often a youth would find himself liable to pay the price for his mother that his father ought to have paid. In such cases his creditors would seize his brothers and sisters and sell them as slaves. A good number of these reached the Rengmas, who would pay about two cows for a young man. The buyer of a female slave could never marry her or cohabit with her. He would either sell her to someone else at a profit or give her in marriage and recoup himself from her marriage price. If a male slave was not resold, a house was built for him and he worked for his master, who would provide him with a wife in the ordinary way. It was the special duty of slaves to help and protect their masters in war. They were adopted into their

<sup>1</sup> Enemy who were encountered on raids and saved their lives by surrender (see footnote p. 157) might, of course, be Rengmas or of any other tribe. There were not, however, many such, a head-hunter with his blood up does not quickly stay his hand.

masters' clans, and could inherit if free-born heirs failed In theory the children of slaves could be sold, but this was very rarely done

### *Position of Women*

What is euphemistically called equality of the sexes obtains in all sections of the Rengma tribe In other words, men are not infrequently under the thumb of their wives Many a time I have tried to persuade a certain Rengma in subordinate Government service to go home and tell his wife he had made a fool of himself in his work and had his pay reduced, just to see what she would say to him He is a brave enough man at a tiger hunt, but he has never plucked up enough courage to adopt my suggestion

This does not mean that women are not made to work hard A man going to his fields strides along with his spear over his shoulder, while his wife follows carrying the provisions for the day, the tools they are going to use, and probably a baby as well Were the man to attempt to carry her load for her, she would be as angry as an English wife would be if her husband tried to run the house To each of a Rengma couple there are certain tasks allotted throughout life, and each does his or her share All family matters of importance are discussed between them, and, apart from the sudden quarrels to which members of any excitable race are liable, they treat each other with courtesy and respect A striking instance of this is the care a husband takes not to thrust his attentions on his young wife <sup>1</sup>

Marriage to a Rengma woman means no great change in environment She probably goes to live only a hundred yards away from the house where she was born, and can see her parents every day Even when they are dead her clan is always behind her ready to back her up if her husband ill-uses her He knows that if he makes life intolerable for her he will lose both her and the marriage price he has paid And she knows that if she becomes impossible to live with she can be turned out and her relations made to repay what they received for her All this makes for reasonable give and take, and so for stability and happiness

<sup>1</sup> See p 212

## PART IV

### RELIGION

#### *Deities and Spirits*

RENGMA religion is without priests and almost without prayer. For many ceremonies a man is his own priest, and for others he calls in an old man whose only qualifications are age, membership of the right clan and knowledge of the proper formulæ. A Rengma does not as a rule offer up supplications, he believes that if he or an old man declares in the proper words that evil and misfortune are to leave him, they will leave him. Spirits are believed to be present everywhere. Offerings are made to them and to the souls of ancestors, but they are rarely asked actively to intervene for the offerer's good. The religion of the tribe is more negative than positive, avoidance of forbidden acts is all-important. An individual or village "genna,"<sup>1</sup> during which work and contact with the outside world are avoided, is the most potent religious ceremony. At a "genna" it is exceptional for the spirits to be addressed, they are supposed to know that the individual "genna" is for child-birth, or the village "genna" to keep pests away from the crops, and so on. Countless though spirits are supposed to be, they are not much discussed, and little is known about them. Spirits in general are called *songnyu* (A) or *aniza* (B and C). There are terms for particular types of spirits, but they are not strictly used, and the confusion is great. Few people

<sup>1</sup> "Gennas" are of two kinds. A village or an individual observing one of the type called *kennu* (A) or *khamani* (B and C) merely refrains from work. The kind called *ketsannu* (A), *kechenna* (B), or *tsenna* (C) is far stricter. When an individual observes such a day, he must remain in the village and avoid all intercourse with strangers. When a whole village observes such a day, the village is closed and the whole community is cut off from contact with the outer world.

trouble their heads as to who created the world, but it is generally believed to have been a particularly powerful *songinyu* or *aniza* who lives in the sky and is the father of all living things, as earth is their mother. In prayers in the Tsemnyu group the names of *Songinyu* and *Songperinyu* are uttered. They are vaguely thought of as a divine pair who created all things and can bring good or evil upon men, but it is not known which is the male and which the female. The *Khapur keching* (A) or *Aketsong khetung* (B) "genna" observed in August is generally regarded as being in honour of the Creator, though *Khapur* and *Aketsong* are terms for the "luck" of rich men.<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Rengmas hold that it was a nameless *aniza* who fashioned the world as we know it, but the Western Rengmas say it was a being called *Ndu* (A) or *Asukhu* (B) who moulded it to its present shape at the beginning of time. Where he passed the land became flat and plains were formed, but he was able to work for only one night, and many ranges of mountains remain unlevelled. According to another story, *Ndu* had a companion. When he had levelled the plains he rested from his labours and went fishing with his friend. Now, *Ndu* had a penis so enormously long that he could wrap it nine times round his waist. He therefore warned his friend not to mistake it for a snake in the water and cut it off. When they were fishing, however, the penis floated down the current towards the friend, and he cut it in two in mistake for a snake. As a result *Ndu* died before he had time to level the hills.<sup>2</sup> After his death the body of *Ndu* was divided up. The Angamis took the thighs, and show exceptional development there to this day. The Lhotas took the arms and the legs below the knees, and are quick with their hands, and good travellers. The Semas took the top of the head and the rest of the penis. The Rengmas took the tongue, and have been talkative ever since. There is a spirit called *Niseginyu* (A), *Aso* (B), *Ayulaniza* or *Kwuyuniza* (C), who is particularly connected with the crops and to whom special

<sup>1</sup> See p. 168

<sup>2</sup> The Angamis say a woman named Ngulu flattened out the plains with a rice-drying rake. She had only one breast, and men laughed at her so much that she ran away in shame without levelling the hills.

deference is paid at the midsummer path-clearing ceremony <sup>1</sup> She is generally believed to be female, and to be clean on one side and blotched on the other, with long hair reaching to the ground All agricultural ceremonies are in her honour, and she is believed to live under the earth Various spirits, all more or less evil, live in the jungle <sup>2</sup> One kind, called *Temme* (A), *Azang* (B), or *Amuze* (C), can be heard talking like men and calling out people's names But when one goes to where the sound comes from there is nothing It is very unlucky indeed to hear one's name called by one of these spirits The Tseminyü group have a special term, *Ramme*, for spirits which appear at night as vague black shapes, "like bears" The other groups call these also *Azang* and *Amuze* respectively To them is attributed that very unpleasant type of nightmare in which one feels one cannot move It is believed that when a man has one of these dreams an evil spirit is lying on him, and would hold him down and suffocate him were it not that these spirits are like men, but not quite complete The Southern group of Western Rengmas say that each one lacks a thumb, and so cannot throttle a man Other Rengmas say they have no big toes, and so cannot hold still the big toes of men they attack A man fighting one therefore always tries to move his big toes, and if he can succeed in doing so he knows he will get free If a man suffers frequently from nightmares of this kind he puts up a slat of *tsomho* wood (*tsomho kesho*—"tsomho slat"—A, *Azang satsatetsu*—"Azang frightener"—B) by his door, with tiger's eyes or rough human figures drawn on it in charcoal All Nagas believe that one of the commonest causes of illness is theft of the soul by an evil spirit Among the Eastern Rengmas spirits which indulge in this are called merely by the general term of *aniza*, but in the Western group they are known as *Aringaro* (A) or *Atsuaong* (B) They live in "bad places" and heavy jungle, and sometimes

<sup>1</sup> See pp 82, 83

<sup>2</sup> Dr Rohém considers that anthropologists often fail to note the phallic attribute of demons I have never been given the slightest hint that Rengma demons have such attributes, though some of the folk-tales might easily have given my informants the lead Rohém, *Riddle of the Sphinx*, p. 41

appear as a gleaming red cock or a snake, and then disappear. A particularly evil one lives in a pool below Tseminyu which is believed to be bottomless. The pool is called *Tihatsu lo zu* ("Tihatsu's field water"). Tihatsu was a woman who struck the ground with her hoe and caused water to gush out, making a noise like "Tsu, tsu," part of her name. To see the spirit means serious illness and probably death. Ransoms for the souls spirits have caught are left by the paths, or small chickens are released as substitutes. In the Tseminyu group the two worst of the *Aringaro* are *Hasung* and *Arori*.<sup>1</sup> *Hasung* is like a man, and goes about with a club with which he inflicts instant death.<sup>2</sup> *Arori* is like a very short man, with an enormous stomach, and is blue in colour. He brings slow, wasting illness. These two are apt to prowl round villages and enter houses, and to keep them out dogs' skulls or scraps of metal are hung over the lintel, for the dogs will bark at them and frighten them away, and they cannot abide the smell of metal. In Tseminyu they tell of a spirit with the curious name of *Tsarumechu* ("Eleven"), who lives in the village of the *Sungi temi te kete nyu* ("Spirits who eat men's flesh"). Once a man died, and a soothsayer went in a dream to this village to get his soul back. The villagers cook the souls before eating them, and had just cut up this particular soul for the pot when the soothsayer arrived. He collected all the pieces except the chin, which he found that *Tsarumechu* had greedily eaten raw. He therefore had to substitute a goat's chin when he put the body together again, and that is why old men have white beards. *Tsarumechu* is a common term of abuse for a greedy man. In Teso-phenyu they say that ordinary *aniza* cook souls, but that the kind called *Atsuaong* eat them raw. Another type of spirit, for which the Eastern Rengmas, as usual, use only the general term *aniza*, but which the Western Rengmas call *Renzu* (A) or *Apuazu* (B), appear to people who are drunk, or weak after illness. It is these spirits that cause such people to

<sup>1</sup> *Arori* (A) and *Achen keteshu* (B) are sometimes also used as general terms for evil spirits.

<sup>2</sup> Sudden death from heart failure would be attributed to *Hasung*.



stagger and fall, for on level ground they tell them to walk carefully, and on steep ground to hurry. Often they lead men far into the jungle till they are hopelessly lost or fall down a cliff. They are believed to be like men, and to wear large brass ear ornaments and carry red spears. Spirits of another kind (*Tetse*, A, *Mezameza*,<sup>1</sup> B, *Anuza*, C) are more kindly. They lead people away into the jungle and play with them, but always bring them back to their homes when the game is over. They are of both sexes, and are yellow in colour, with big stomachs. It is believed that there are spirits both in the sky and below the earth. The Western Rengmas call the former *Tsungenyu* (A) or *Atsa'ong* (B), and the latter *Theronyu* (A) or *Anuza* (B), the Eastern Rengmas using the general term *anuza* for both. Nothing whatever seems to be known about them beyond the fact of their existence.

The Western Rengmas believe that a rich man has a sort of familiar (*Khapu*, A, *Aket song*, B) which brings him luck. It is spoken of as his "dog," and is believed to be like a black dog with a white chest. It lives in its owner's house, and usually lies either near the bed in the inner room or near the basket in which rice-husks are put in the outer room. Sometimes it will sleep in a granary, and the hollows in the pile of rice used by these spirits as resting-places are pointed out. It is only visible in dreams, but strangers have to be careful not to anger it. For this reason a guest in a rich man's house never sits either near the bed or near the husk basket, nor so that he blocks the doorway, in case the "dog" wants to go out. If a man angers the familiar unknowingly, he will be struck dumb and his eyes will stare. This is said to have happened to Hepegha and Rillo at the funeral of Kezetha, a rich man of Tseminyu, even though they sat by the hearth. After its owner's death the familiar remains in the house till it is demolished, when it disappears. The equivalent among the Eastern Rengmas is a spirit they call *Ashupu* ("the catcher"). It is believed that in the old

<sup>1</sup> Cf the Sema *Muzamuza*, *Lhota Nagas*, p. 116. It is a spirit of this type that haunts the *mezameza avu* stone on the Tesophenyu-Kitagha path. This particular spirit appears to be exceptionally maleficent. (See p. 232.)

days rich men used to own these spirits, but the last known case occurred before Meluri was founded. The peculiarity of the "catcher" was that it held immovable anyone who tried to steal from the house of the rich man it was protecting.

### *Life after Death*

If a Naga be asked what shares of meat are distributed and to whom at any ceremony, he will launch forth on a long and detailed list without a moment's hesitation. But if he be asked what the tribal beliefs are regarding the next world, he will nearly always think for a minute before he answers, and may even reply that he would like to refresh his knowledge first by talking the matter over with the old men of his village. The first is of practical importance to him. The second is so inevitable that he does not worry his head about it. Nevertheless, every tribe has a definite belief, and that of the Western Rengmas is as follows. The soul (*nkapenyu*,<sup>1</sup> A, *ichamphuwa*, B) of the dead man does not at first know that he is dead. Then he sees his own body lying in the outer room ready for burial, and understands why his relations and friends are weeping. He hangs about the house till the *Ngada* ceremony which marks the close of the year.<sup>2</sup> Refreshed by the food and drink offered then, the soul goes to the Land of the Dead (*Teronyu phong*, A, *Keshanyu*, B).<sup>3</sup> The Kentennyu clan, which is known to be of fairly recent Sema origin,<sup>4</sup> take a different route from the Azonyu clans and go to Sihama, an Angami village to the south-west, and there enter the earth—quite how is not known. The journey is believed to take three days, and it is believed that souls used to send up a smoke-signal from Sihama to tell their friends of their arrival.<sup>5</sup> All other clans go to Wokha Hill and enter the earth by the

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes this term is used for a sort of guardian spirit which lives near a man's bed and ceases to exist after his death.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> Very, very rarely a man goes to the sky and lives there for ever.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> The soul is sometimes said to arrive three days after death, no mention being made of awaiting the *Ngada* ceremonies. This is an example of the inconsistency which is so common in Naga accounts of what happens after death. The last man to send up a smoke signal from Sihama is said to have been Kezoha of Tsemnyu, who died about 1915.

Road of the Dead (*Teronyu tsong*, A, *Kesha nu*, B) used by the Lhotas<sup>1</sup> At the entrance to the cave by which they enter stands a woman called Azati The souls are weeping for those they are leaving, and she comforts them with kindly words As each soul enters she smacks it across the face, and thereby causes it to forget all its former life By whichever route they go all clans meet below the earth On the way there a man meets all the enemies and animals he has killed in this life, but the dog which was killed at his funeral barks and frightens them away. His clansmen, too, help him, for men of all clans are waiting by the road, and as each soul passes it is asked to what clan it belongs, and is then escorted by its own relations It is a thirsty road, but the funeral chicken scratches in the ground and water flows forth Or, according to another account, a lizard gives the soul water, and it is for this reason that no Rengma ever kills a lizard Jungle and creepers block the way, and a girl who dies a virgin will have no one to help her to hack a path through<sup>2</sup> When a lover on earth mopes and falls sick after the death of his beloved, it is believed that his soul is away helping her along the road of the dead and clearing her way for her. Tiny children are met by a good spirit called Samazi, who suckles them There is a lake that all have to cross Samazi carries the little children, and in the Tesophenyu group of villages each is given at death a rough bamboo fan (*awhentsa*) to hold in front of its face so that it shall not see the water and be frightened This is put with other death-offerings outside the front wall of the house When the souls arrive at the World of the Dead they find it to be an exact repetition of this life<sup>3</sup> The same men marry the same women, and the same children are born Those who were poor here are poor there, and those who gave Feasts of Merit here give them again in the world below Those who were unmarried here remain so there Thieves and wicked men remember their sins and are unhappy, and the good live in joy Including this world there are seven

<sup>1</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, pp 118, 119

<sup>2</sup> See *As Nagas*, p 228 and note

<sup>3</sup> Those who die "apota" go to a world of their own, about which nothing is known

worlds, in layers, as it were, one below the other. A man, therefore, is born and dies seven times in all. At the last death those who could sing well become crickets on this earth, and those who could not butterflies<sup>1</sup>. For this reason grown men and women do not kill butterflies and crickets, though nothing seems to be done to stop children doing so. Especially are people careful not to kill the large black swallow-tail with red and white markings, as these are believed to be the souls of rich men, the pattern on the wings representing that on the cloth of a giver of the great Feasts of Merit<sup>2</sup>.

The Eastern Rengma belief is very simple and vague. They are content to know that their dead go back to the ancestral home of the tribe, and there meet the fate of the other dead, though what that fate is they have forgotten. They say that the soul (*sumetu*) goes to the land of the Western Rengmas in the form of a hawk (*alanyu*)<sup>3</sup>. There it lives its life over again in the village of the dead, though whether that village is in this world or below it is not known. After four or five lives the soul just ceases to be. Together with this belief is held an entirely inconsistent one in reincarnation, and for three or four months after a death no one of a dead man's family will kill a bird or a butterfly in case it is the dead man. Besides the soul proper they believe in a "birth spirit" (*aniza hngworawa*), which lives in a man and protects him throughout life, and dies when he dies. The Western Rengmas hold that animals also have souls (*tekhonyu*, A, *tekho*, B), but the Eastern Rengmas know of no such belief.

### *Medicine-men*

Medicine-men (*täminyü*, A, *tämawa*, B, *tämwar*, C) exist among the Rengmas, but are far from common. They may be of either sex, and usually have epileptic tendencies. As in all Naga tribes, they combine the functions of fortune-

<sup>1</sup> See *Ao Nagas*, p. 226 and note.

<sup>2</sup> Lhotas of some villages, on the other hand, kill these butterflies on sight, believing that to meet one portends a death, a male butterfly being fatal to man, a female to a woman, an old one to an old person, a fresh one to a child, and so on.

<sup>3</sup> See *Ao Nagas*, p. 226.

tellers and physicians They claim that their familiar spirits reveal to them in dreams what sacrifices are necessary for the recovery of a patient, and they themselves will suck "drit" from a painful limb, producing from their mouths little stones, tufts of hair and so on as proof of what they have extracted Even so, the canny Rengma does not like making fraud easier than necessary, and always insists that a medicine-man should treat him in the day in a good light If the conditions are too stringent the medicine-man counters by saying that his familiar spirits are away and he cannot undertake the treatment It is from seeing these familiars (*annu*, A, *machamphu*, B, *aniza*, C) either in dreams or as hallucinations that a man first knows that he is going to become a medicine-man They are like human beings, and the Western Rengmas assign two, a male and a female, or occasionally three, to a medicine-man, but the Eastern Rengmas say that a human being gains these supernatural powers by making friends with one spirit of the opposite sex After the first visit of a familiar, a person who wishes to retain its help must sacrifice and eat a cock After that he or she must, among the Western Rengmas, refrain from eating the flesh of dogs, bamboo rats, rats and squirrels, all of which are regarded as stupid animals An Eastern Rengma soothsayer need only refrain from eating the flesh of animals killed by leopards or tigers Most people to whom the spirits offer their powers accept them by doing the sacrifice and refraining from forbidden food, for there is a living of sorts to be made out of the trade which will last till extreme old age, and a Naga's chief anxiety is the very natural one of how he can fill his own belly The great disadvantage of the powers, however, is that whoever has them will either have no children or, if he or she has any already, they will die and the family become extinct When, therefore, persons of good family acquire these powers, their relations often surreptitiously mix forbidden things with their food, and so annul the powers, but make possible the continuance of the clan For instance, a woman called Hengwale of Tsemnyu began to practise when she already had four sons They naturally objected, and when their mother was in a convenient trance one day they popped some

bamboo rats into her cooking-pot, and that was the end of that trouble

### *Public Ceremonies*

Most of the public ceremonies in a Rengma village are closely connected with agriculture, and have been described under that heading. One or two, however, deserve separate mention here. The chief is the harvest-home, which marks the end of the labours of the year and corresponds to the Angami *Terhengi*.<sup>1</sup> Great importance is attached to it, and no Rengma would think of missing the days of feasting and general rejoicing in his village. In the Tseminyu or Southern group of the Western Rengmas it is called *Ngada*, and is held as follows at the end of November. On the first day, called *zu nye kethu zong* ("pita madhu making day"), rice-beer is brewed. On the second day, called *sikar karong zong* ("grave repairing day"), the graves of ancestors are repaired by their descendants, all fallen stones being replaced. On the third day, called *kesi nu shong kedung zong* ("dead men's leaf-cup putting day"), the women place leaf-cups of "pita madhu" on the graves of their own parents and grandparents and of their husbands' ancestors. The most remote ancestors are not forgotten, but no woman may make an offering on the grave of an ancestor of the same name as her husband. If she does she will be quickly widowed. Ancestors are believed to influence the crops and general prosperity of their descendants, and these offerings are made in gratitude for the harvest that has just been gathered. This pious duty accomplished, the village gives itself up to enjoyment, and on the fourth day, called *künyhung zong* ("dancing day") a dance in full dress is held and the great men of the past are celebrated in song. On the fifth day, called *kepye zong* ("singing day"), dancing and singing still go on, but the whole village does not combine. Instead, parties of young men in full dress go round chanting, and collect rice and meat to be consumed on the last day of the ceremony. Singing is thirsty work, and the sixth day is sufficiently described by its name, *rensu zong* ("drinking day"). By

<sup>1</sup> See *Angami Nagas*, pp. 201 sqq.

the seventh day everyone is more or less worn out. No work in the fields is allowed, and the day is called *in kedhu zong* ("thatch cutting day") because men take the opportunity of cutting thatch for repairs to their houses. The last day of the festival is *Ngagukhng* ("festival end"). On it the young men in every "morung" hold a feast which corresponds in importance to our Christmas dinner.

In the Northern group, where it is called *Akfu kesa*, the festival lasts for six days. On the first day the graves of ancestors are repaired and offerings made on them, and on the remaining five days the village gives itself up to singing, dancing and amusement. The *Akfu kesa* festival proper, however, is preceded by four days of preliminary ceremonies. The formal washing by the whole village on the third of these days seems to indicate that these preliminaries correspond to the *Zu kul* ceremony of the Southern group described below, a big washing ceremony (*Akhu khemeta kesa* <sup>1</sup>) being held by villages of the Northern group only once in seven years. On the first day of the preliminary ceremonies everyone stays at home, and prepares rice-beer. Chillies may not be eaten on this day. On the second day the formal eating of the first-fruits (*Asu mi kesa*) takes place. The village is closed to strangers, and every household eats a little rice taken from the granary before dawn. On the third day all go down to the village spring and wash their bodies, clothes and weapons, thereby getting rid of all the impurities of the past year. On the fourth day thoughts turn to the year to come. All go to the fields in the morning, and every man clears a little jungle on the land he intends to cultivate. That done he lights a fire with a firethong and watches the smoke. If it goes straight up, a prosperous year is foretold. The Eastern Rengmas hold a similar festival called *Akhuchi* to celebrate the end of the year.

The *Zu kul*, an important ceremony of the Southern group of Western Rengmas and of the Eastern Rengmas, corresponds exactly to the Angami *Sekrengi* <sup>2</sup>. The object of it is to get rid of all the evil of the preceding year. In the Tsemnyu group it is held at the beginning of January.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 176

<sup>2</sup> See *Angami Nagas*, pp. 203 sqq.

Men must remain chaste throughout. On the first day rice-beer is prepared. On the second day the men build little brushwood shelters in the village and sleep in them that night. The third day is the great day of the festival, and on it no woman may bathe or draw water, for it is essential that the men should wash in absolutely unpolluted water.<sup>1</sup> All the males of the village, including the smallest boys, go down at dawn and wash in a stream. When this is over all sit down and try to get up together to start for the village, for a man who gets up after some one else will have bad luck. On arrival at the village the men build sheds of bamboo mats in front of their houses and eat in them apart from their wives, who may on no account enter them. Besides the washing ceremony there is on this day one connected with the head-tree. Before dawn the *Tegwo kebogu* kills a cock and impales it under the tree with its beak towards the east. During the day the young men collect bamboos for a new fence round the tree, each man bringing one, which he may cut from anywhere—no one may forbid him. When all have brought their bamboos they gather round the tree. The *Tegwo kebogu* calls out "*O pfu tsalu*," the head-hunter's chant, of which the meaning seems to be unknown, three times, after which all join him in the song. The fence is then built, and all who assist have to remain chaste till the end of the month.

On this day all the luck-stones<sup>2</sup> in the village are counted and washed, save that if a woman in the village gives birth to a child on this day those under the head-tree are not touched.

The next day every householder calls in an old man to do a private ceremony of purification for him. It is called *Mmung ye kezang* ("the cutting away of a thousand mouths"), because it is believed to wipe away the effects of all the evil spoken of the man during the past year. The old man, holding a cock, utters the following blessing: "To-day the dawn is fair. To-day the sunset is fair. Your wife's father

<sup>1</sup> In some Eastern Angami villages little sheds are built by the water, and young men guard it night and day for some time beforehand. It would be disastrous if a menstruating woman polluted it.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 231, 232.



blesses you Your mother's brothers bless you Your father's sisters bless you<sup>1</sup> All bless you May you grow like a plantain shoot May you be like a clear spring gushing out from a rock May you be like a great tree May your children flourish May they be as numerous as the young of crabs May they be as black ants for multitude May the seed in your field sprout even if it falls on a rock. May it grow if it falls on a log May your rice overtop the weeds May each rice-plant throw out branches like a bamboo May each rice-plant be like a *nshampung* tree May there be a thousand grains in each ear May your stomach be filled with one mouthful of food May your stomach be filled with one sip of rice-beer May your stomach never ache May your head never ache May your bowels never be too loose May your urine never flow too fast May all evil fall upon this fowl And you, fowl, may you shake all evil off you with your wings and your tail May the rain fall on you and wash all this evil from you May the sun dry up all the evil on you " He then kills the cock and takes the omens from its intestines This ceremony is compulsory on this day, but can be performed for a man or woman any time in the year if the need for it is felt If it is done for a woman a hen is killed instead of a cock After it the man and wife sleep apart for one night.

Among the Eastern Rengmas, who call the ceremony *Ngazu*, the "genna" lasts for ten days, during seven of which no stranger may enter the village There is a formal washing, as among the Western Rengmas, and the next day an old man cuts a little jungle on the block the village is going to clear for the coming year's cultivation At this ceremony every man who has a son erects in front of his house a tall bamboo from which hangs a gourd with bamboo rattles below it

In the Northern group of Western Rengmas the great purificatory ceremony, called *Akhu khemeta kesa*, is performed only once in seven years, and is a very elaborate affair indeed

<sup>1</sup> It is to be noticed that all the relations mentioned either belong to or have married into another clan It is considered so unlikely that men of the sacrificer's clan have spoken evil of him that it is held to be unnecessary to mention them

On the first day rice-beer is brewed, and on the second young men go out and cut bamboos, sections of which will be used as cooking-pots in the camp which will be made in the jungle. In Tesophenyu village all go into the jungle on the third day except the four clans who originally came from the Southern group<sup>1</sup>. There they build four camps of brush-wood near a stream, the clans being divided up among the camps. The end shelter of the row in each camp is for the oldest man in the camp. After making the shelters, all return to the village and eat a meal of pork and rice-beer only, without rice. In the evening every male in the village goes down to the camp allotted to him. Boys going for the first time take cocks in baskets carried by a carrying-band round the forehead, even though some of them are so small that they themselves have to be carried by their fathers. The cocks which crow loudest are selected to be taken down, and the loudest crower of all is set aside on arrival at the jungle camp and handed over to the old man, who puts it in the shelter. All wash in the stream and return to the shelters to sleep. When the boys are all asleep, the grown-up men go quietly round and collect all the cocks except the one in the charge of the old man. They kill them and eat them, and when the boys ask in the morning where they are they say wild cats have taken them. On the fourth day the ceremonies begin before dawn. While it is still dark every man goes to the stream and fills a clean section of bamboo with water, which he will take up later to wash the luck-stones. Then all, in silence, wash in three places in the stream, beginning downstream and moving up. At each station, the body, the end of the "lengta," a corner of the body-cloth and the spear and "dao" are washed. This over, all return to the shelters and wait for the cock to crow at dawn. After each crow the men shout, and the times it crows are counted, for the men of the camp whose cock crows most often will get most rice during the year. Soon after dawn all go outside the camp and stick up their spears in a bunch in the ground. The old man, holding the cock, walks three times round the spears,

<sup>1</sup> In other villages, where there are no immigrant clans, all go to the jungle and the ceremonies are modified accordingly.

giving the cock a squeeze at each circle to make it squawk, and calling on the spirits of the great men of all tribes to come. Finally he kills it with a blow on the head and watches the position of its legs as it dies. If they hang down equally, the omen is a good one. He then waves it ten times and calls out, "Lhotas, Angamis, Semas, good men, all come and eat." With these words he throws it into a fire, where it is left to burn. It is now time to go back to the village. Just outside it a log called *akheshu* is set up, corresponding exactly to the *Lhota opya*.<sup>1</sup> It is definitely believed to represent a man, and all throw bamboo or wooden spears at it. It is very unlucky to miss one's throw. If any part of the log has no spears in it, men who have done the head-taking ceremony remedy the omission by throwing spears at that spot from a very short range. When this is over, all enter the village and assemble round the head-tree singing. The next business is to wash the luck-stones in the village with the water drawn from the stream before dawn. Old men do this, visiting the head-tree, "morungs," and houses where the stones are. The stones are carefully examined, and if marks like those of rats' teeth are seen on any stone it means that someone of the owner's clan will kill big game during the year. The old men visit all the houses of the clan and drink a little rice-beer out of a leaf-cup. They then go to their own houses and call out that others may eat and drink now that they have done so. Men, however, eat outside their houses for the rest of that day, using sections of bamboo as cooking-pots and leaf-cups for their rice-beer.

The four clans in Tesophenyu who did not go into a jungle camp have special duties to perform.<sup>2</sup>

Every man of these clans catches a young chicken in the village street. He can take anyone's, and no complaint can be made. Then all go into the jungle and light a fire near a bamboo clump. After they have sat and talked for a time,

<sup>1</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, pp. 123, 124. Colonel Shakespear reports that Kabus put up the effigy of a man outside the village gate and throw spears at it, and I have seen similar effigies outside Zemi villages in the North Cachar Hills.

<sup>2</sup> In villages where everyone goes into the jungle, the ceremonies described below are performed on their return.

the leading warrior of the party cuts the first bamboo. He must fell it clean with one blow of his "dao," or he will have bad luck in the coming year. Then all cut bamboos and release their chickens near the clump. Obviously the chickens are scapegoats which take away with them all evil attached to those who release them. All return to the village carrying their bamboos and singing as if they had taken an enemy's head. They assemble at the head-tree and build a fence round it with the bamboos. A large cock is then given to the *Avu kepaowa* who has washed the village luck-stones, and he impales it on a sharp bamboo with its beak to the east.

On the fifth and last day of the festival every householder gets an old man to perform for him a ceremony called *Aza zu kutam* ("all mouths purifying"), which corresponds exactly to the *Mmung ye kezng* of the Southern group. Holding a cock, the old man prays as follows: "To-day's dawn is fair. It is as if a door had been opened. If your wife's relations have spoken evil of you, one with ten fingers and ten toes<sup>1</sup> is taking away the evil. Be happy. Be like a tree. Be like a clear spring gushing out from a rock. May all your evil fall upon this cock. And you, fowl, shake all this evil from your wings and tail." Then he waves the cock nine times. The man for whom the ceremony is being done puts a little spittle on it and the old man throttles it,<sup>2</sup> watching the position of its legs for the omens. When it is dead he takes it away to his house, sprinkling a little rice-beer on the ground as he goes.

Another ceremony of purification is held in the middle of June. In villages of the Tseminyu group on the day of *Arori keshu kennu*—the "genna" for evil spirits—everyone goes outside the village before the morning meal carrying a burning brand and five *khashenu* leaves, in each of which are wrapped a scrap of iron dross and a red feather, of which the end must not be broken, from a cock's rump. He (or she) spits, and brushes his body ten times with the leaves, count-

<sup>1</sup> The cock is spoken of as if it were a man.

<sup>2</sup> If the ceremony is being done for a man who has killed an enemy, tiger, leopard or bear, the cock's throat is cut.

ing aloud and saying at the end, "May I have no illness" If children are too small to brush themselves, their parents do it for them All house doors are shut early that night and fires lighted outside them No fowls may be eaten, and sexual intercourse is forbidden The corresponding ceremony in the Northern group is called *Achang ketashû khamani* Before dawn every person goes outside the village on the eastern side carrying a brand and nine *akhashi* leaves (called *khashemu* in the Southern group), each containing a little dross and a red feather from a cock's rump Each person then says, "The village is observing 'genna' to-day I am worshipping the spirits (*aniza*) to-day and making this offering May I and my household be well" The brand and the leaves are then laid on the ground with the tips of the feathers pointing away from the village, and left there The Eastern Rengmas call the "genna" *Amuri khukre khamani*, because on it all paths leading to the village are closed with crossed stems of wormwood On that day only fish and ginger may be eaten with the rice, and anything left over is buried near the hearth Before the morning meal begins the householder throws tiny scraps of food on the ground and says, "We have been ill May we be well again"

In the Southern group another public ceremony takes place at dawn about the middle of August It is called *Khapur kechng* ("luck worshipping") All the men in the village wash and polish their spears and "daos" the night before They are then so placed that none of them touches the ground, the spear-butts resting on pieces of wood The men must sleep apart from their wives that night and the next Very early in the morning they emerge from their houses, leaving their doors half open Each wife lays a "dao" on the ground just inside the house, with the edge towards the door, till her husband returns after the ceremony All the men assemble outside the village facing the rising sun Then, taking the time from the *Pensengu*, each man lays his weapons on the ground, his spear on his right and his "dao" on his left The *Pensengu* then calls upon the spirits of the crops (*Nisegmyu*) of the Lhotas, Semas, Anga-

mis and Mao Nagas (*Sempvukungungu*) to come to his village, and prays for good crops and good health, other men joining in the prayer if they wish. All then pick up their weapons, taking the time from him, and return to their houses.

Corresponding to the *Khapur kechung* of the Southern group a ceremony called *Akhetsong khetung* ("luck genna") or more rarely *Tero khetung* ("Dead men's genna"), is performed in the Northern group. It lasts for three days, the first of which is observed as a "genna" against hail. On this day no cloths may be shaken out or wrapped quickly round the body, lest a wind-storm be caused which would bring hail. That evening all weapons are washed and left resting on pieces of wood, as in the Southern group. After this has been done the household goes to bed in absolute silence. Before dawn all the men of the village, without eating or drinking or speaking to their wives, assemble on an open space<sup>1</sup> outside the village. There they sit down in absolute silence facing the east, neither speaking nor even spitting. Then the oldest man present calls out, "All are present. Come, ye spirits," and every man lays his weapons very quietly on the ground, taking care not to clink one against the other, or his rice will be thin in the ear. All sit in absolute silence for about half an hour, when the old man calls out, "Pick them up." All then pick up their weapons and go quietly to their houses, only old men being allowed to speak on the way. At the door every wife hands her husband rice-beer, and he pours a little on the ground and prays for a blessing on his house and crops. No work may be done that day or the next.

### *Feasts of Merit*

Feasts of Merit play a very important part in the life of all Naga tribes. The series is strictly prescribed, and every man tries to proceed as far in it as his means permit, for on the feasts he has given his social status depends, it would be an unheard-of thing for a man to go no further with the series if he could afford to do so. Socially and economically the

<sup>1</sup> The place of assembly must be entirely free from trees or scrub, or birds and animals will come out of the jungle and damage the crops.

feasts are very valuable. The ceremonies tend to strengthen the ties of kinship, and at them wealth, in the form of rice and meat, is distributed and shared by all, down to the very poorest. Sometimes, as in the case of Kotsenyu and Kotsenishinyu, Tesophenyu and Kitagha, and Therugungyu and Thegwepegedenyu, givers of feasts exchange presents of meat even though living in different villages. This is regarded as signifying the strongest possible bond of alliance. The feasts are so important that they deserve a somewhat lengthy description.

I will begin with the series in the Tseminyu, or Southern, group of the Western Rengmas, taking the feasts in order —

*Sengkhu*. This is compulsory for every bridegroom the first *Ngada* month after marriage. The oldest man of the giver's clan, bringing his own cooking-pot, comes to the giver's house. A small pig is handed to him, and he says over it the following prayer to the spirits *Songmyu* and *Songpermyu*. "We are offering you a boar so big that when he roots on the mountain-side a spring bursts forth. May rice grow on rocks and trees in the fields. May rice pests be mad and forget to eat the rice. May the rats be mad. May the birds be mad. May each rice-plant grow like a basket spreading from its narrow base. May rice grow tall as *nsongphung* reeds. May every ear hold a thousand thousand grains. May each grain be as big as a sago-palm berry or a cane-berry. May one mouthful of food fill the stomach. May no motion and no urine be quickly passed. May children be as ants, and as herds of elephants, and as herds of buffaloes, and as flocks of hornbills, and as spiders' eggs, and as crabs' eggs. May there be no illness. I have no brothers. I am going to eat this pig, but you are to partake of it first." He then kills the pig by thrusting a sharpened bamboo into its chest, and cooks <sup>1</sup> the flesh in his pot and eats it. Other meat is provided for the relations of both sides, and they are feasted after a share has been offered to the giver's ancestors. This share is cooked with ginger and salt mixed with *tsonho*.

<sup>1</sup> At all feasts some of the firewood used must be from a tree with leaves like walnut leaves and spiral seed-pods. This is considered the greatest of all trees, and the use of its wood will therefore increase the greatness of the giver of the feast.

berries,<sup>1</sup> and tied up into little leaf-parcels, one for each ancestor. The parcels, with a little leaf-cup of "madhu" for each, are tied together and fastened to the inner wall of the house.

*Tero Khngwu* ("fowl throat-cutting") This is a preliminary to *Pesngnyu Khungho*, the second feast proper, and is performed three days before it. An old man of any clan is called in and sits outside the house facing the door, while the giver and his wife sit opposite to him inside the doorway. He is handed a cock, and waves it in front of the couple while he offers the same prayer as that recited at the *Sengkhu* ceremony, finishing with the words, "May all evil fall upon this cock instead of upon this man and his wife." He then says to the cock, "Flap your wings and get rid of all the evil which has fallen on you," and with these words cuts its throat with a bamboo knife. He then opens it and inspects the small intestine. If it contains blood it forbodes injury or death for the owner, if it is shrunk his family will dwindle, if it is full the family will have ample food. He then takes the bird away as his fee and cooks and eats it in his own house.

This ceremony is repeated before all subsequent feasts.

*Pesngnyu Khungho* ("the feasting of the old men") A man does not ordinarily give this feast till he has been married four or five years and has accumulated wealth in the form of rice. On the night before this and subsequent feasts an old man of the clan comes to the house and does a special ceremony. He sits in the inner room, facing the door, and has on his right hand a basket containing ten male ornaments and on his left a basket containing nine female ornaments.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> The man's basket contains (1) a *pi mhung* cloth, (2) a pair of large brass ear-rings—now obsolete, (3) a wooden model of a "dao," (4) a wooden model of a spear, (5) a cowrie apron, (6) a hide model of a shield, (7) a long red hair ear ornament, (8) a bamboo model of a spiral brass ear ornament, (9) an ivory armlet or a bone imitation of one, and (10) a "deo-moni" bead. The woman's basket contains (1) a cloth ornamented with cowries, (2) a white bead, (3) a pair of metal armlets, (4) a pair of metal bracelets, (5) a small conch-shell bead, (6) a large conch-shell ornament, (7) a skirt, (8) a *khongpau* bead, and (9) a flat brass ear ornament, now obsolete, or a bamboo model of one. If the giver of the feast does not possess all these things he borrows them from friends.



He pushes forward first the man's basket and then the woman's as an offering to their guardian spirits (*nkapenyu*). The baskets are then placed for the night under the beds of the husband and wife, who have been sleeping apart since the ceremony began.

The feast itself is held next day. The old man comes again, accompanied by the giver's *terhe*—the special friend of his clan who assists him at all ceremonies.<sup>1</sup> One big pig or two medium-sized ones of either sex are killed by the old man after he has uttered the usual blessing. The share of the ancestors is cooked by the old man and he eats first in the house. Friends and clansmen are entertained as they drop in in the course of the day, and in the evening a piece of raw pork is taken to every old man in the village and to every man who has given the full series of Feasts of Merit. After this and all subsequent feasts the giver and his wife must first have sexual connection in the jungle in the day-time.

*Zengkesi* ("village share") This is the first of the big feasts, and is preceded, three days beforehand, by a *Tero Khugwu* ceremony. The feast itself is a very simple affair, though an expensive one. Four or five, or even more, cows are killed, and pigs as required, gallons of rice-beer having been, of course, prepared beforehand. On the morning of the first day of the feast an old man of any clan kills the first cow by spearing it in the side. No prayers are offered. The two haunches and an amount of meat from the body equal to them in weight are set aside for the men in the village who have given the *Gu Kegha* feast, the final ceremony of the series. The ends of the hind-legs and the forequarters are given to men who have married women of the giver's clan. The other cows are then killed and the meat is distributed throughout the village, a treble share going to men who have given the *Arrhi Psugha* feast, the next in the series. On the next day the pigs are killed, the oldest man of the giver's clan killing the first after reciting the prayer used at the *Sengkhü* ceremony. He eats some of the pork first, and the rest is divided among every household in the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 153

village, a treble share going to those who have given this feast. The giver has a separate pig for himself, of which he and his household must eat the whole, none of it may be given away. At this feast the giver is expected to entertain with food and drink as many people as like to come to his house at any hour.

A man who has given the *Zengkesi* feast may add a projecting eave to the front of his house.

*Arrhi Psugha* ("enemy-counting feast") The origin of this name is not known. The feast begins with a repetition of the *Zengkesi* ceremonies. At the end of them there is a ceremonial killing of a cow without blemish, followed by the ritual fight for the intestines which is characteristic of the *Rengmas*. In the middle of the second day of the feast all the guests go to their homes, and return in the afternoon. The cow to be sacrificed is tied to a post of *peshong* wood in front of the house. The oldest man of the giver's clan places a lump of ginger on his spear to ward off evil spirits and utters the standard blessing. Then, advancing towards the cow, he stabs it behind the shoulder. The moment he has done so his nearest male relation, usually a brother or a son, holds a cloth up between his face and the cow so that he does not see it fall. When it is down the giver's *terhe* slashes its stomach open with a very sharp "dao" and the young men present fight wildly for the intestines. It is tabu for the carcass to be dragged along the ground by the fighters, so clansmen of the giver hold it down with a long pole across the neck. Others pour water on the fighters! A portion of the intestines has to be saved and given to the killer as his share. The *terhe* may cut off and take away as much meat as he likes. One leg goes to the oldest near male relative of the giver on his father's side. The rest of the meat goes to the giver to distribute as he likes, he may not eat any of it.

A man who has given this feast is not entitled to wear any special clothes or ornaments or to embellish his house, but his daughter has the top of the helix of her ear pierced and wears a tuft of cotton wool in it.<sup>1</sup>

*Gu Kegha* ("mythan sacrifice") This is the last and

<sup>1</sup> See p. 34.

greatest of the feasts, and it is the ambition of every Rengma to become rich enough to give it. The preliminaries are the same as those in the last feast up to the point when the unblemished cow was killed. In the *Gu Kegha* feast a bull mithan without blemish is substituted. It must have no teeth missing, no chips off the horns, no white blotches anywhere, and no whorls of hair except on the back of the neck and behind the ears.<sup>1</sup> On the day of the sacrifice the mithan is kept without food or water. At the "morung" the giver's clansmen tie to its horns one cane rope and one sword-bean creeper to drag it forward, and one sword-bean creeper to hold it back if necessary. It is then brought to the giver's house and the creepers are dropped on the ground. The owner hands a leaf of "pita madhu" to an old man of his clan, who stands in front of the mithan and, after uttering the standard blessing, addresses it as follows: "If you trample on pigs we do not mind. If you trample on men we do not mind. You must come to no harm. Go in peace." He then pours the rice-beer over the mithan, and the young men, all in full dress, pick up the creepers and drag the animal all round the village, while the giver of the feast watches from the inside of his house through the half-open door. While the mithan is being dragged round the village it is a common practice for people to pour water on it and ask it for a blessing. The round completed it is tied up to a forked post and then killed with horrible cruelty.<sup>2</sup> The oldest man of the giver's clan spears it feebly and is screened with a cloth, as at the *Arrhr Psugha* feast. Before it falls the *Sigha kethugü*,<sup>3</sup> the old man whose duty it is to bury those who die accursed deaths, seizes its tail, and he and the *Tegwo kebogu*,<sup>4</sup> another old official, hack off as much meat as they can from the living animal.<sup>5</sup> As soon as the animal falls the owner's *terhe* slashes the stomach open, and the young men fight for the meat as at the *Arrhr Psugha* feast. When the fight is over the giver of the feast opens his

<sup>1</sup> For the importance of whorls see *Lo Nagas*, p. 105.

<sup>2</sup> I write in the present tense for the sake of convenience, but in reality executive orders have been passed modifying this method of killing.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> The Phom Nagas also cut lumps of meat from a living mithan at sacrifices.

door The whole village is feasted and the meat divided up as at the last ceremony The owner keeps for ever in his house the skull and the off forefoot A man who has done the mithan sacrifice is entitled to full ornaments and full embellishment of his house The mithan sacrifice can be repeated as often as a man can afford to do so, and at the second and subsequent ceremonies the young men taking part wear hornbill feathers in honour of the giver whether they are entitled to them of their own right or not A considerable interval is, however, always allowed to elapse before this ceremony is repeated, both because of the time necessary to accumulate enough wealth to perform it again, and because of the following belief It is held that the unblemished mithan sacrificed goes straight to the Land of the Dead, where it still remains the property of the giver of the feast If he sacrificed too many at short intervals his herd in the Land of the Dead would increase till it became a nuisance for the dead to look after and they would send for him and he would die It is for this reason that the unblemished mithan can never be a cow A cow would breed in the Land of the Dead, and the giver of the feast would have to go and look after his property. Conveniently for the guests at the feast, animals killed for meat are believed to have no after-life, and there is consequently no limit to the number that can be slaughtered

The series prescribed in the Tesophenyu, or Northern, group is on the same lines as that of the Southern group

*Awtu Waza Kukuwo* ("fowl young waving") This is done by everyone as a preliminary Often a youth will do it in his father's house before marriage, and it is compulsory after marriage for rich and poor alike With the couple sitting inside the house, an old man squats in the doorway with his stick in his left hand and a small chicken in his right. He waves the chicken, calling down blessings on the husband in no set formula, and strangles it between his finger and thumb Hanging it up outside the house, he repeats the ceremony with another chicken for the wife He is given a meal outside the house, and goes home with the two chickens He eats the one with which the husband was blessed, and

his wife the other. Meanwhile the woman who has been blessed goes down to the village spring and washes herself and brushes herself with a whisk made of seven or nine kinds of jungle leaves, praying as she does so that all illness and misfortune may leave her. When she comes back her husband leaves the house, taking with him any dishes containing food of which he has eaten, and the woman kills and eats a hen alone.

*Amuhung Kutam* This is another purificatory ceremony. The proper time for it is when the rice first comes into ear. Every householder must do it at least once, and it is often repeated if the need for it is felt. An old man of any clan is sent for, and on arrival is given a meal. He is then handed a sharpened bamboo on which every member of the household has dabbed some spittle, cooking-pots, a small sow, rice, rice-beer and some salt mixed with pounded *athama* berries. With these he goes outside the door, which is shut behind him by the family, who remain inside the house. Outside the house he holds the pig and calls out, "I am off to sell this pig." He then walks three times a few paces to the east and a few paces to the west, stopping at the end of each walk and saying, "This is a fine pig. Its feet are white. Its forehead is white. Its teeth are perfect. This is a lucky day. I am offering the pig to the spirits (*aniza*)."<sup>1</sup> These preliminaries over, he lays the pig on the ground on its right side and squats by it. He touches it with the bamboo in various parts of the body, saying, "No, this will pierce the nose. No, this will pierce the leg. No, this will pierce the eye. No, this will pierce the liver," and so on. Finally he touches it over the heart and drives the bamboo home with the words, "This is where our ancestors pierced pigs." He then lights a fire with a fire-thong and singses the pig. When he opens up the pig he sprinkles blood three times to the right and three times to the left with the words, "O Spirits, I make offering to you first." He then cuts seven ribs from the right side and throws them on the ground with the words, "I am giving this to the spirits that the clansmen of the sacrificer's wife<sup>1</sup> or evil men may

<sup>1</sup> See p. 176

not spit on him and make him lame and crippled " He then hangs up one hind leg on each side of the door and cooks and eats the stomach The rest of the meat he takes home

*Avu Kechenna* (" pig ceremony ") This is the first of the optional ceremonies, and consists merely of a distribution of meat The giver's clansmen are invited to drinks in the evening, and before dawn he kills a big boar The meat is divided into small pieces of which every clansman gets five and other householders three People come for their shares at dawn, and are given drinks A man who does this ceremony expects return presents from people who have received meat

*Kekhe Khamesho* (" old men's feast ") This corresponds to the *Pesingnyu Khungho* of the Southern group It is given at the end of the year, before the felling of jungle on " jhums " for the next year has been begun Two days before the feast the giver sends for one old man and one old woman of his clan and seven old men of other clans These old people are given drinks that day and the next On the day of the feast at least one cow and two boars are killed before dawn and the meat is divided up as at the last feast. In the afternoon the nine old people, the eight men carrying spears and the woman a stick, come to the house again. A new hearth is made for them outside the house with wooden pegs instead of hearthstones <sup>1</sup> and their share of drink and food put by it The food is cut up and cooked, and the youngest of the old men lays out the shares on leaves in a particular way First he puts five pieces on each leaf three times, then three pieces three times, then two pieces three times and finally one piece three times All eat and call down blessings on the house as they go They each get a share of raw meat to take with them, those of the giver's clansman and the old woman being specially large Three days later the old woman comes back and clears up the house, receiving another piece of meat for her trouble. For five days the giver and his wife drink only " pita madhu," and at the end of that time he goes to where he intends to

<sup>1</sup> It is not uncommon in other Naga tribes to use pegs for hearths at which food is ceremonially eaten

make a "jhum," lights a fire with a fire-thong, and fells a little jungle. That evening they both drink "rohi madhu" for the first time in the house of a clansman. For a further ten days they may not eat chillies or enter a stranger's house.

No ornaments are given for one performance of this ceremony. Some men, however, who cannot afford to give the more costly feasts give this one three times, and are then entitled to wear a special cloth. The repeated ceremonies are exactly the same as the original one, save that the special hearth for the old people is made of stones instead of pegs.

*Azikesa* ("beginning sacrifice") This is done twice, once by the man and once by his wife. The feast is given in the cold weather, usually some two or three years after the last feast. The giver first kills two cows, one of which must be without blemish, and distributes the meat to all who have given this feast. Then for a fortnight, on alternate days, the giver must feast lavishly all who come to his house. For this he requires helpers. These consist of one old woman of his clan, two old men of any clan and two unmarried youths and two unmarried girls of any clan. These seven persons live and sleep in his house for the fortnight and help with the cooking, the distribution of food, and the bringing of fuel and water. It is the old woman's special duty to see that no drinker's cup is ever empty, but it is tabu for her to touch the gourd from which she pours, and she has to wrap leaves round the neck. The young people have to remain chaste.

The wife can either give her feast the same year or can wait, if it is desired to spread the expense over a longer period. The ceremony is exactly the same, save that one cow and one pig are killed instead of two cows, and the old woman helper is of her clan.

*Kethi* ("new") This ceremony is notable for the stamping out of a bonfire by the young bucks of the village. As a preliminary a cow without blemish is killed and divided up among all who have given the *Kethi* feast. On the evening of that day the young men of the "khel" make a fire in

front of the "morung," and one of the old men who is going to help in the giver's house shouts, "One of the men of your 'khel' is giving a feast. Come and pound for him." Three or four pounding tables are rushed up and rice poured on them. All sing and shout and pound as badly as they can, spilling all the rice onto the ground. Then three old men of any clan and one old woman of the giver's clan, with two unmarried youths and two unmarried girls, come forward and take charge, driving away the people who have been pretending to pound. From then on these eight persons help in the house, while the village is feasted for a fortnight, as at the *Azikesa* ceremony. At the end of this time the four young helpers dig a pit outside the house and fill it with *athama* wood, which crackles loudly when burning. When it is lighted the young men of the "morung" march round it singing, while the three old men in the house take the omens. This is done by putting into a basket a scrap of every kind of food and two leaf-cups of rice-beer, the cups being cut in such a way as to leave a long stalk sticking up on one side. One of the old men touches the basket with a reed, and the future is foretold by the way in which the stalks wave. Then the old men come out of the house and the ceremony of the fire begins, the giver of the feast watching with a lighted reed-torch in his hand. Each of the old men touches the fire three times with his foot, drawing back violently each time. This is the signal for the young men to rush shouting at the fire and stamp it out with their bare feet, often getting badly burnt in the process.<sup>1</sup> This over, there is drinking all round, and the old men get as their perquisite a piece of meat each and all the bones of animals killed. This ceremony is held before the "jhums" are cut, and the next day the giver of the feast begins felling as after the *Kekhe Khamesho*. For this feast the giver gets the right to wear the cloth called *alung tsu* or *kethi tsu*.

*Kethi Kvyathi* ("new sacrifice") The essence of this ceremony is that a newly bought cow must be killed. A man who is going to give this feast announces his intention

<sup>1</sup> The giver of the feast preserves some of the burnt ends of the reed torches used to light this fire and puts them in a wooden frame over his door.



by killing a mithan the summer before when the rice is in the ear,<sup>1</sup> and distributing the meat to his friends and relations, who all give him rice-beer in return. He may not eat any of this mithan himself. The ceremony itself takes place at the usual time in the cold weather. A mithan and some pigs are killed for meat, but for the actual sacrifice a cow is required. This must be red and without blemish, and must have been bought from Lhotas. It is tied to the front of the granary of the giver of the feast, and is there speared by his *asahowa*—the friend of his clan who assists at ceremonies.<sup>2</sup> The carcass is left where it falls, and the giver and his guests eat and drink in his house. Then the guests return to the granary and fetch the carcass and lay it down in front of the house. The *asahowa* then makes an incision with a bamboo knife—steel may on no account be used—and pulls out the liver, of which he offers little scraps to the spirits. The intestines are then pulled through the incision, and the young men fight for them, while the giver of the feast pours water over them. The meat is divided up, the *asahowa* and the giver's father-in-law each getting a foreleg, and the guests go to their houses. Later in the evening they return, and drink and sing till far into the night.

After this ceremony the giver is under certain restrictions for sixteen days. He may only drink "pita madhu," and eats pork for five days, fish for five days, bamboo rats for five days and fowl for one day, all without rice or chillies. On the seventeenth day all the people he has entertained go with him to his field and help to clear his "jhum." He may not sit on the ground, and a log is cut for him to sit on. His first meal on his return must be in the house of his *asahowa*.

*Asi Kiyath* ("mithan sacrifice") This is the supreme sacrifice. A preliminary mithan is killed the previous summer, as for the *Keth* *Kiyath* ceremony. On the day of the ceremony another mithan is killed and the meat divided among all who have done the full series of Feasts.

<sup>1</sup> It is believed that crops will be ruined if a mithan is killed while the rice is in the blade.

<sup>2</sup> Called *terhe* in the Southern group. See p. 153.

of Merit The unblemished bull mithan which is to be sacrificed has been starved for three days, for it is believed that if this be done it will fight more desperately and give better sport when it is dragged round the village On the morning of the day on which it is to be killed it is tied up in front of the "morung," and an old man of the giver's clan pours "pita madhu" on its head and says, "I am sorry for you We cannot give you jungle leaves to-day." It is then brought to the giver's house and tied to a forked post The guests assemble, and in the afternoon an old man of the giver's clan throws "pita madhu" right over its back so that none of it touches the animal<sup>1</sup> and says to it, "You must not injure people Everyone has come to look at you because you are so beautiful Go in peace and return to this house" It is then dragged round the village with ropes When it has been brought back it is again tied to the forked post There the *asahowa* spears it, having put ginger on the tip of his spear and holding a corner of his cloth before his eyes "for shame" If the stab is not fatal the *asahowa* slips away through the circle of villagers who are standing and singing round the sacrifice, and hides behind the house In a minute or two he returns and spears it again There is no cruel hacking of meat from the living animal as in the Southern group When the mithan is dead the *asahowa* opens the stomach with a bamboo knife and cuts off a little of the liver Having ascertained from its appearance what the omens are, he cuts it up into tiny pieces for the spirits These little bits he wraps in a leaf, which he ties to the front of the house, leaving one small piece on the ground "for the hornets" The triple collar of *rokhah* creeper that was round the mithan's neck is hung up on the forked post The usual fight for the intestines then takes place, and the guests drink and sing at the giver's house till morning A man who has given this feast earns full ornaments and the right to carved posts and horns on his house The giver keeps the skull and shoulder-blades of the mithan in his house For a year afterwards

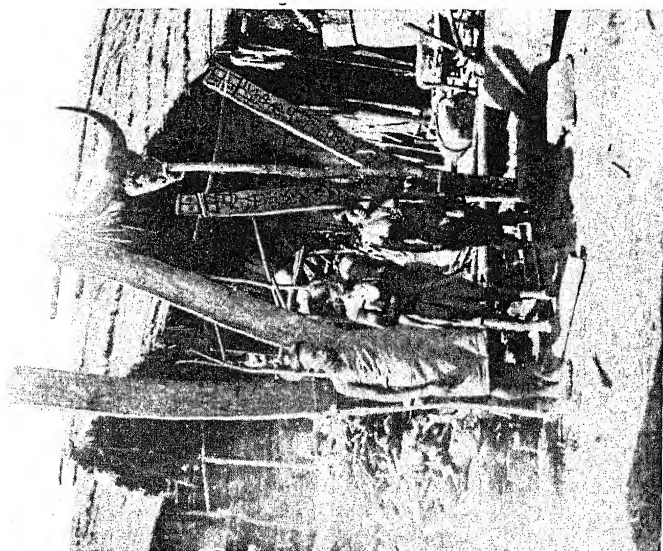
<sup>1</sup> It is believed that if any of this rice-beer touches the animal it will become weak and unable to walk

he may enter no house in the village but his own and his *asahowa's*, and may accept food only from him. With his rice he can only eat bamboo pickle, pork or beef.

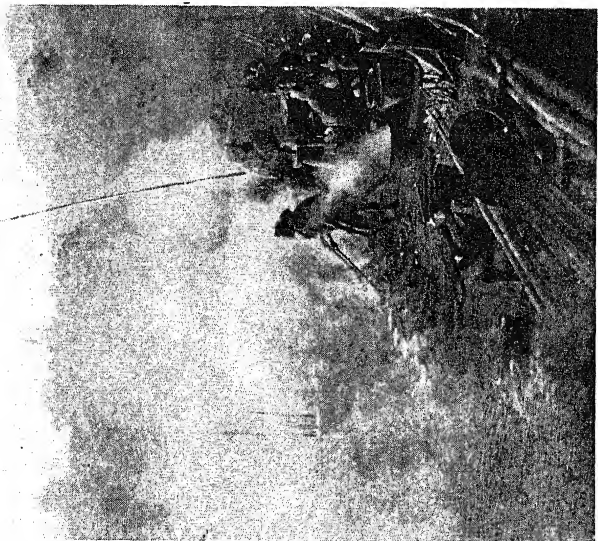
The feast can be repeated if the giver is rich enough.

The Eastern Rengmas are as keen as the Western on Feasts of Merit, and in Meluri, for example, about forty people a year will give one or other of the series if the crops have been good. They are all given about the end of January or beginning of February. The series resembles that of the Western Rengmas, save that buffaloes are invariably sacrificed instead of mithan. It is noticeable that the earlier feasts consist only of buying and distributing meat.

The first is the *Aoshe*. At this meat is bought and distributed, and the giver can wear a dark blue cloth called *kachitsü*. The cooking for this and all subsequent feasts is done outside and in the front room of the house, the roof of that room being removed to avoid the risk from the blazing fires over which the cooking is done, and which are so hot that gourds on the end of three-foot sticks have to be used to ladle out the contents of the pots. When a number of feasts is going on a village is full of only half-roofed houses with the smoke pouring out of them—a curious sight. The next is the *Akenya Kesa*, at which meat is again bought and distributed. The third, the *Atethu*, is similar but for the curious custom that meat from a tiger's kill is, if possible, distributed. The fourth, the *Achu*, is the first sacrifice proper. At this one cow and two pigs are killed. A stone is put up on the funeral monument of a giver of this feast. At the *Atsah* a cow and three or four pigs are killed, and the wife of the giver may wear an ornamented skirt called *amni*. The *Arrih Ketsah* is the first buffalo sacrifice. For it one buffalo and several pigs are required. The buffalo is killed with great cruelty. All its four legs are hamstrung, and it is belaboured with rice-pounding poles while lying helpless on the ground. Finally the giver of the feast spears it in the heart. The tail is not cut off. The head is fastened at the fork of a new post which has been put up, and the guests feast and dance and sing all night. I have seen a dance kept up till nine next morning, and husky singing went on for another two hours.



POSTS COMMEMORATING BUFFALO SACRIFICES : EASTERN  
RENGMA



COOKING FOR A FEAST OF MERIT : EASTERN RENGMA

[To face page 194.]



When the celebrations are over the skull is cleaned and hung up outside the giver's house on his cross-beam. If the house is burnt down by any chance, wooden models of the heads destroyed are put up.

The second buffalo sacrifice is the *Akezu Kesa*. At this one buffalo and a number of pigs are again killed. The giver's wife can henceforward wear cowries round her waist, but neither she nor her husband can eat buffalo meat for the rest of their lives. The giver puts a carved cross-beam on his house. The final sacrifice is the *Aowiphu*, and at this both buffaloes and cattle are killed to the limit of the giver's wealth. His wife earns a skirt on which white lines denote the number killed, and the man earns the right to wear an embroidered cloth. He adds a carved post to his house, and in front of it sets up a very tall bamboo bound with cane leaves, with a chain of bamboo hoops hanging from it.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Stone Monuments and Ponds*

Except in the connection with funeral ceremonies<sup>2</sup> the Eastern Rengmas set up no stone monuments. Two types are, however, found among the Western Rengmas. One of these, called *bmnye* (A) or *apüng keye* (B), consists of a semi-circular platform built out from the bank on the upper side of a path. The outside is built up with horizontal stones and riveted with upright stones, the middle being filled in with earth and rubble. They are meant as seats for wayfarers, and oaks are planted on them to give shade. Their object is commemorative, and in the Tsemnyu group a man will make one either for himself or for his father.<sup>3</sup> In the Tesophenyu group, on the other hand, they are made only by childless men whose memory would otherwise die. A man with children will never make one, for "his name goes into the stones" and his family would die out. The clansmen of the maker, his wife and his sisters' husbands all help, but full dress is not worn and there is very little

<sup>1</sup> Cf. illustration of *aghruza*, facing p. 176 of *Sema Nagas*.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 220.

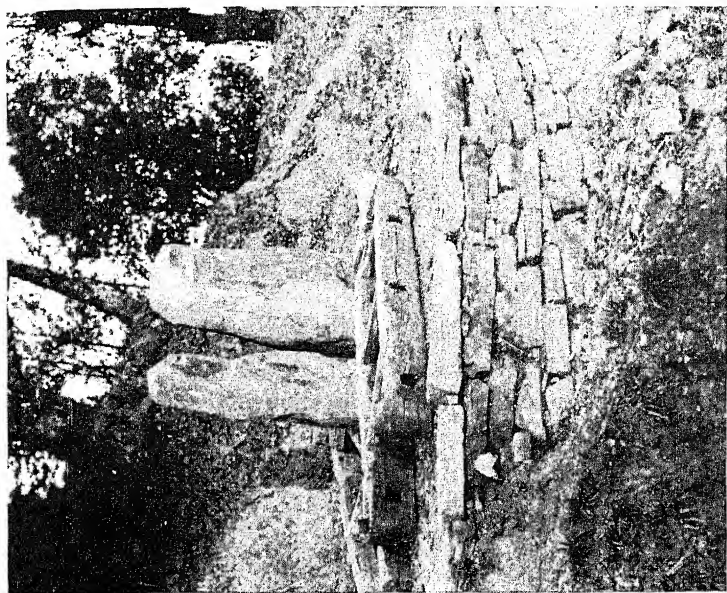
<sup>3</sup> It is very usual for a man who has suffered from a series of bad harvests to make one of these monuments in his father's name, thereby gaining the fertilising favour of the dead.

ceremonial On the day the maker remains chaste and eats no chilhes, and his wife does not spin, or the stones used will break as thread does In the Tesophenyu group he may not eat with strangers, but in the Tseminyu group there is no such prohibition In the latter group, if the monument is to commemorate a dead man, the first stone must be laid by the village burier or a man who has no fields If it is for a living man, an old man of any clan lays it In the Tesophenyu group this must be done by the oldest man of the maker's clan The monument is finished in one day, and if it is for a dead man all food and drink provided must be finished that day All pots used and the skulls of half the animals killed for the feast are left on the monument

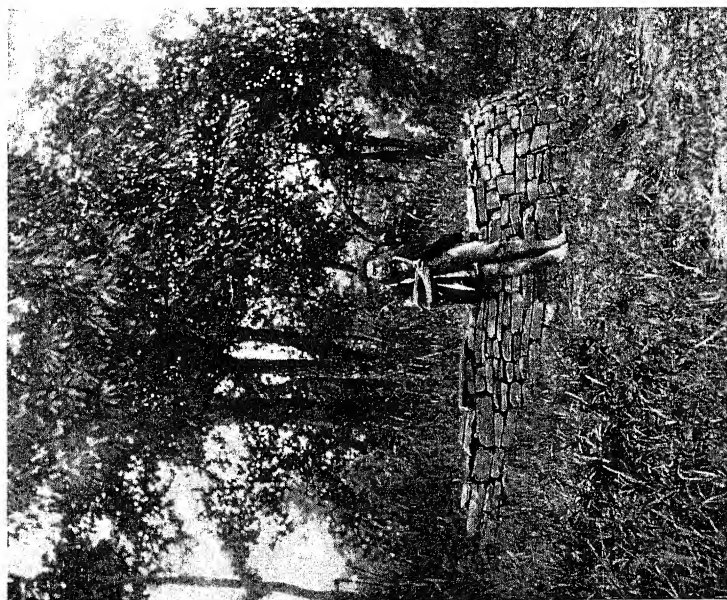
The other type, called *tso kũlo* (A) or *alung keye* (B), consists of an upright monolith for the man in whose name it is being set up, a smaller one for his wife, and a still smaller one for each of his children <sup>1</sup> The erection is carried out with much ceremony, all of which is concentrated on the man's stone Members of certain clans never perform this ceremony, which is full of potent magic One man of the Kentennenyu clan did it in the past, and his family died out, since then no member has ever dared to repeat the experiment Until very recently no member of the Mhatongza clan had ever done it One man has now taken the risk, and the results are being watched It can only be done by a man who has given the full series of Feasts of Merit <sup>2</sup> The object is definitely commemorative, and a man who has no children occasionally performs it twice in order that his name may be for ever remembered A man with children, however, would not squander their patrimony on a double ceremony Sometimes, too, a man who has grown rich will set up a *tso kũlo* in memory of his father In the Tseminyu group the procedure is as follows A man who intends to set up a *tso kũlo* goes into the jungle with one or two relations or intimate friends, keeping his object secret from the rest

<sup>1</sup> The Ikongo of Madagascar also put up monoliths in honour of the dead, dragging them on rough sledges to the place of erection as the Rengmas do See Linton, *The Tanala*, Field Museum of Natural History, Anthrop Series, xxii, 182, 183

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 181 *sqq*



A TSO KULO, SHOWING THE SLEDGES ON WHICH THE STONES WERE DRAGGED



A BINNYE

[To face page 196.





of the village. Having found a suitable stone, he touches it, and announces that he has chosen it. Thenceforward he marks his dreams carefully, and if they are of good omen that stone is definitely selected. If they are unfavourable, a new one has to be found. A few days before the ceremony the stones are quarried out and sledges are made of rough timber<sup>1</sup> on which to drag them. From that time the erector must refrain from sexual intercourse and from eating chillies, and his wife may not spin, lest the stone break during the ceremony. On the day before the ceremony the erector kills a small pig. He bleeds it into a leaf-cup, which is carefully set aside, and eats the whole of the meat. Next day all the men of the village assemble to help, dressed in full ornaments. The erector may not chase and catch a pig or chicken or any animal that day. His wife may not witness any of the ceremony, but other women may watch from a discreet distance. All the men go down to where the stones are lying ready quarried. There the lead is taken by an old man who may be of any clan, but who must have won the full insignia of a warrior. As soon as the man's stone has been levered onto its sledge the erector offers before it five leaves, each containing a red cock's feather and a scrap of iron dross, and says to the stone, "Travel well. Hurt no one. Bring good fortune." Then the old man pours on the stone "pita madhu" and the blood of the small pig killed by the erector the day before, uttering the same words as the erector. He next releases a live cock on the stone. If it stands there and crows, it means great good fortune, and if it leaves droppings on the stone, food will be abundant. It is allowed to escape into the jungle. After the old man has first picked up the dragging-rope, all take their places on it and drag the stone up with much singing and shouting. If the sledge sticks and will not move, the old man again addresses the stone, and asks it to be light and come easily. The wife's smaller stone is dragged behind on another sledge, and the children's stones are carried up on men's shoulders. On arrival at the place where the stone is to be erected the old man begins the digging of the hole. All then

<sup>1</sup> See *Angam Nagas*, illustration facing p. 233

join in, and the stone is levered and hauled into position. The wife's and children's stones are then set up and a rectangular platform of stones is built round the whole. All then repair to the erector's house for lavish feasting and song lasting far into the night.

In the Tesophenyu group there are a few differences of procedure. The owner does not see the dragging of the stone and makes no offering of cock's feathers and dross. He remains in his house till he hears that the stone has reached the place of erection. The old man who takes the lead and first lifts the rope must be of the erector's clan. His address, too, to the stone is somewhat different, and runs as follows: "You are a fine stone. This man found you a fine stone. That is why we are going to drag you. Do not be heavy. Follow easily after the young men dragging you. All have put on their finest clothes to greet you." The stone is dragged up in the same way, but the erector, before it is set up, offers meat and rice-beer in front of the hole and returns to his house, where he entertains all who have assisted. After a drink and a little food they return and set up the stone.

A rarer type of this monument consists of a long line of small monoliths. There are the remains of a very ancient line near Tseminyu Inspection Bungalow. This monument was set up by a childless widow called Zamu, who wished to use her wealth in this way. She is said to have sprinkled husked rice over the stones and to have uttered a curse that any one breaking them should have his crops destroyed by hail falling as thickly as the rice she sprinkled. Another famous line is near Phesinyu, by the path from that village to Tseminyu. It was set up long ago by a man called Nzege. Nzege was orphaned as a boy, and had neither friends nor possessions. No girl would walk with him or carry his hoe and food to the fields for him. People merely spat with contempt when they saw him. He begged them to be more friendly, and said he would feast the whole village some day if they would. But the only answer was mocking laughter. Yet he did become rich later in life, and set up this line of monoliths, killing many mithan for the feast.

But the people of the village were so ashamed of their past conduct that they could not eat the good fare put before them. A similar monument was set up by Gwalu, a descendant of Nzege, in 1929. There are eighteen small monoliths in line, ranging in height from nine to eighteen inches, and commemorating Gwalu's father, Hongpung, his wife, and all who were dependent on him. Another modern line of eight stones is in Tesophenyu village. It is noticeable that the man's stone of this line is curved over at the top, exactly after the fashion of Konyak monoliths. There is yet another line at Therugunyu, set up in honour of a man named Kashenga. Each stone commemorates a head of game killed by him, and the monument is the only one I know in honour of hunting.

As stated above, Eastern Rengmas set up no stone monuments except in connection with funeral ceremonies. A rich man of Meluri named Morosi erected a monolith after the Angami custom some generations ago. He was, however, soon afterwards killed by a tiger close to the village fence, where no one would ever expect a tiger to penetrate. This has always been regarded as a punishment for starting a new custom, and no one has followed his example. His stone has fallen, and is still to be seen near the southern edge of Meluri village.

The Western Rengmas very occasionally make ponds (*zu kedu*, A, *atsu kechu*, B), at the digging of which many cattle and pigs are sacrificed. In the Southern group a man, who is not necessarily childless, can make one in order to bring increase and prosperity in general. It must be where there is a constant supply of water, for he would suffer from grave misfortune were it to dry up. In the Northern group, on the other hand, it is almost invariably a childless man who digs a pond, in the hope that thereby he will be granted the blessing of children. It must be near the village path, but it does not matter at all if it goes dry every year.

### *Birth*

To give birth to a child is usually an easy thing for a Naga woman. It is by no means uncommon for a woman to feel her pains come on after she has gone down to the fields for

her day's work. She just retires, with another woman to help her, to the jungle at the edge of the cultivated land, gives birth to her child, and walks up the long hill to the village with it in the evening. Some tribes regard a birth near the fields as particularly lucky, doubtless from a belief that it brings fertility to the crops. The Lyengmai, for instance, in the south-western corner of the Naga Hills district, erect a monument to every such child on the path leading up from the fields. The monument closely resembles the Rengma *binviye*,<sup>1</sup> and consists of a semicircular stone seat, with a rough stone bust of the child on it, flanked by a small upright stone on either side, and with a small flat stone behind. The number of such monuments to be seen on one path is surprising. The Rengma considers a birth in the fields as in no way showing special hardihood on the part of the woman, but does not regard it as notably lucky. Naturally a woman usually has warning in time, and gives birth to her child in her husband's house. No male may be present, though the husband may wait in the outer room. It is considered somewhat unlucky by the Western Rengmas for him to be absent at the time, and a boy born while his father was away would be named *Tesingkhing* (A) or *Tesengkhin* (B), and a girl *Tesinu* (A and B), meaning "stranger from another village." The Eastern Rengmas have no such name. When the arrival of the child is imminent, the woman is made to consume as much rice, rice-water and rice-beer as possible, all very hot. This is believed to make delivery easier. If there is undue delay, the woman is given a piece of a very smooth kind of bark or a little soap creeper to chew, in order to make the child come away easily. Birth always takes place at the back of the inner room of the house. The woman crouches for the delivery, and is attended by some experienced woman, usually her mother or mother-in-law, as midwife. The cord is cut by the Western Rengmas with a bamboo knife, and by the Eastern with a sharp piece of wormwood stem. This, with the cord and after-birth, are buried by the mother or midwife in the floor of the house. As soon as the child

<sup>1</sup> See p. 195,

touches the floor the mother dabs a little spittle on its forehead and says "It is mine" The child is then washed When all is over the Eastern Rengma father comes in and blesses his child by putting a little rice in its mouth and saying, "Live happily, be strong, be rich, be healthy." Among the Western Rengmas the ceremony is more elaborate The father immediately places three stones in position and makes a new hearth a little way away from the household one He lights a fire with a firethong and cooks in a new pot rice and a fowl—a cock for a boy and a hen for a girl—which he must kill with his own hand This meal is eaten by the mother only, and she uses this hearth for three days<sup>1</sup> She gives the child a tiny scrap of meat and of rice, putting it on its forehead or in its hand It is never put into the mouth, as it is believed that salt turns a baby's lips black At and after the meal great care is taken that no one but the husband or wife steps over the feathers plucked from the fowl or the ends of the sticks burning in the new hearth It is believed that anyone so transgressing is sure to quarrel with the parents For ten days nothing in the house may be touched by anyone who is not an inmate, and the parents speak to no strangers<sup>2</sup>

The Western Rengmas name a child on the third day after birth A selection of names current in the clan, which must not include that of anyone who has died an unnatural death or, in the Northern group, has had his head taken in war, is made, and the father takes omens with chips of wormwood to see which are lucky. If no name in the father's clan seems to be of good omen, a further selection is made from the mother's clan<sup>3</sup> Whichever clan has to provide names, the selection is made by old men of the father's clan, who meet at the parents' house It would be "shame" for men of the mother's clan to see her so soon after giving birth to a child Two names are eventually given to the child, but

<sup>1</sup> The Kentennenyu clan extend this period to ten days

<sup>2</sup> It is believed that very rarely a child will utter a cry while still in the womb This is considered to be most unlucky, and to foretell for it an accursed death

<sup>3</sup> A selection may even be made from a clan to which neither parent belongs In such cases Lhota custom allows the clan from which the name is chosen to exact a fine, but among the Rengmas no fine is paid.

of these one is ordinarily never used <sup>1</sup> This name is not secret in the strict sense, and it is not tabu to reveal it—indeed, I have heard of one man who used either of his names indiscriminately in public Yet a man ordinarily does not know the second names of his brothers and sisters, or even of his own wife At the naming two little strings of “*deo-moni*” —or more usually bazaar imitations nowadays—are given to the child In the Tesophenyu group of villages a pig is killed and cooked at the ordinary household hearth and the baby is host at a little feast given to those who have come to assist at the naming In the Tseminyu group the baby, on his mother’s back, entertains the children of the village at a little feast just outside the village ten days after birth

If a child cries continuously it is believed that its name disagrees with it, and it is changed by the parents without any ceremony

The Eastern Rengmas are supposed to name a boy on the sixth day after birth and a girl on the fifth But this rule is not strictly adhered to, and the whole business is most casual No omens are taken, and anyone in the village seems to be at liberty to suggest a name, the parents finally deciding on the one they fancy most

The Southern group of the Western Rengmas is rich in names, but the Northern group borrows a large proportion from the Southern group or from Lhotas or Semas, probably because the group contains so many immigrant clans Ordinarily Rengma names have as little remembered meaning as most English ones have, but to a few a meaning can be attached For instance, in the Northern group, among men’s names Rillo means “happily got,” Nyano “helper,” Ndrillo “favour at last,” Gwahem “fortunate,” Khapega “killer of two” (i.e. of two deer on one day), and among women’s names Lunyele means “desired,” Gwahile “well bought,” Byengsanu “good traveller” (so called because her father was a Sub-overseer in charge of a great length of road) In the Northern group typical men’s names are Zevethang, “brave”, Kokhaiyo, “of noble race”, Yesamu, “taker”, Phamusha, “searcher”, and women’s

<sup>1</sup> Cf *Angami Nagas*, pp. 218, 219

names Meheli, "good", Nzeli, "straight" Among the Eastern Rengmas typical men's names are Zathepa, "vat", Watepa, "heir", Phasao, "keep your temper", Siyito, "rich in possessions", and typical women's names Zamatsu, "active", Nutitsu, "feeble", Cherhitsu, "cutter up" A man is never spoken of as the father of so and so His own name is always used Persons bearing the same name do not address each other by name, but as *azong su* (A), *ezong sowa* (B), or *inyo kechnwa* (C) Such persons often become formal friends, but need not necessarily do so

Not till the lobes of its ears have been pierced with a little bamboo spike and its hair has been cut can a baby really be said to be a full member of the community The hair cannot be cut until the ears have been pierced The Eastern Rengmas are bound to postpone this till after the next harvest Then the oldest man of the child's clan first pierces the ears and then cuts the hair, shaving the head entirely or leaving a top-knot, according to the sex of the child The hair is carefully collected and put into a section of small bamboo When the child can understand it is shown to it and then thrown away Among the Western Rengmas a child's ears are pierced any time up to two or three months after birth, a male friend of the father performing the ceremony A "genna" day is always chosen All Rengmas agree that the piercing of the lobes of the ears is of the utmost importance, as a person with unpierced ears would not be recognised and welcomed by relatives in the land of the dead If a child is born with a little pit just where the helix joins the head, it is regarded as particularly lucky, the pit having been made by dead ancestors to mark their favour In villages of the Tseminyu group the first hair-cutting can take place any time between three and seven months after birth, but in the Tesophenyu group a boy's hair is cut in the fifth month and a girl's in the sixth The ceremony is curious The mother threads a bead on a single hair, which she cuts with a bamboo knife so that the bead falls to the ground<sup>1</sup> The bead is never picked up, and

<sup>1</sup> Daughters of Sema chiefs, when very young, sometimes wear on the crown of the head two very small "deo moni" beads strung on little tufts of hair tied together at the ends



the bamboo knife, with the hair tied to it, is hidden in the house by the mother. Were she not to begin the cutting in this way her husband would never have any luck in hunting. He continues the cutting, shaving the whole of a baby girl's head, but leaving unshaved the crown of a boy's, for it is tabu to shave that.

Nurse-maids being unknown, a woman carries her baby with her wherever she goes,<sup>1</sup> at home or in the fields, in fair weather or foul. Care is, however, taken by Western Rengmas not to let a child touch the chin of either of its parents. It is believed that if it does it will develop sores on the mouth. The Eastern Rengmas do not hold this belief.<sup>2</sup> A boy is suckled for three years and a girl for two. It is believed that the mother's milk is the most strengthening diet there is, and it is particularly important that a child should be strong. It is quite common to see a mother sitting weaving with her little son standing by her and sucking her breast for a minute during an interval of play. From a very tender age a child eats rice which its mother chews and puts into its mouth. Consequently by the time it is weaned milk is only an unimportant extra, and it causes no shock to the child to give it up, he has probably been drinking rice-beer for some time. If a tiny baby will not suck the breast it is believed to be angry. To please it, if a boy, the father makes a little shield of matting and a little wooden spear and "dao," and, if a girl, armlets and bracelets made of strips of bamboo, and hangs them up near the bed where the child sleeps. Among the Western Rengmas it is rarely that anyone can be found willing to suckle a baby which has lost its mother, lest the evil fate which killed its mother may be carried by it. The father does his best to keep the little thing alive on sips of rice-water, but it has a poor chance. If any woman does suckle it it is adopted by her husband and passes wholly to the foster-parents. Among the Eastern Rengmas there is no such strong objection to feeding a motherless baby, and a woman who is weaning her

<sup>1</sup> Except when answering a call of nature, at which time it is absolutely forbidden for her to carry her child.

<sup>2</sup> Among the Konyaks to touch a man's chin is to inflict a deadly insult.

own child is usually ready to suckle another one if asked. Her husband will often adopt such a child, but custom does not enjoin this as necessary, and frequently it goes back to its real father.

If it is noticed that the sexual organs of a little girl are very pale, the fact is never forgotten, and she will get no husband, for it is believed that any man marrying such a woman will die an accursed death. Such a death, too, will be the fate of its parents if a baby sucks its thumb the first time it puts its hand to its mouth.

The Eastern Rengmas attach no importance to twins, and the Western Rengmas very little.<sup>1</sup> The latter, though they do not think them unlucky, dislike them because they are hard to bring up, it being a great strain on the mother to suckle two infants. A tendency to produce twins is believed to be contagious, and no one will borrow anything intimately associated with a woman who has given birth to a pair, such as her comb or her weaving implements. If she lends gourd seed or any other seed to anyone, she cannot give it directly from her hand, she first puts it on the ground and the borrower then picks it up. It is believed that if one of a pair of twins dies, the other will be unhealthy and listless till death.

When a child pulls out a loose milk-tooth he buries it at the foot of a house-post or leg of the bed and says, "Grandfather, take this bad tooth and give me a good one in exchange."<sup>2</sup>

### *Marriage*

Unless physically deformed or an imbecile, every Naga marries. No man can set up house on his own without a wife, and every man, however poor, secures one. He will

<sup>1</sup> In this they differ from the Western Angamis, who say that the birth of twin boys means success in war for the "khel," and the birth of two girls losses in war, but ample food. No Naga seems to have heard of a case of twins of opposite sexes. For the Meme belief see *Angami Nagas*, pp. 341 and 342. The Aos consider twins very unlucky (*Ao Nagas*, p. 267), Semas also dislike them (*Sema Nagas*, p. 262).

<sup>2</sup> A Lakher child asks the chameleon to give it a new tooth in exchange for an old (Parry, *The Lakhers*, p. 393 and note). In ancient Mexico children used to give their first teeth to the mice by pushing them down mouse-holes, in the hope that their second teeth would be strong like mice's teeth (Spence, *Magic and Mysteries of Mexico*, p. 85).

pay the marriage price in slow instalments, and he knows that hard work will produce a living from the soil. There is no question of a man remaining a bachelor because he cannot afford to marry. He marries first and affords it afterwards. Indeed, it is far easier for a man and a woman to make a living together than it is for each separately, there is less duplication of tasks.

In some respects the customs of the Western and Eastern Rengmas differ widely. I will take those of the former first. Among them marriage never takes place until a considerable time after puberty has been attained, but sometimes two rich families who wish to unite arrange a marriage between a son and a daughter in infancy. The father of the baby boy gives the father of the baby girl a pair of small shell discs<sup>1</sup> to wear at the ends of her long ear-ornaments when she gets bigger. Such a betrothal is arranged only if the boy's father is quite sure he will be able to find the marriage price later. In the old days arrangements of this kind used to be made between powerful families in different villages, with a view to obtaining assistance in war. Such engagements are considered very binding, and it is a matter of "shame" if the couple do not eventually marry. Even so, however, marriage is not forced on them if they grow up to dislike each other, a marriage to which both parties do not consent being entirely contrary to the Rengma sense of what is proper. It has always been far commoner, however, for a youth and a girl in the same village to fall in love. The parents are told, and are expected to give their formal consent at the proper moment. Probably the whole village knows. The couple have got to know each other well by working in the same field-company,<sup>2</sup> and the man becomes the girl's *logwa ponyu* (A) or *azipuzya* (B), and the girl the man's *logwa lenyu* (A) or *azw wata* (B). These terms only mean that they work together in the fields, and carry no sense of sexual intimacy, which is forbidden by custom on the ground that it is likely to cause sterility.<sup>3</sup> The man shows his liking for the girl by

<sup>1</sup> See p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 75.

<sup>3</sup> This is in marked contrast with the Ao custom (see *Ao Nagas*, pp. 212 and 270).

making her baskets and carrying-bands, and she in turn makes him "lengtas," "dao"-belts and ornaments for his ears. In due time the parents are told what they have long known, and, being practical people, begin to think about the marriage price (*tenenyu mngetu*, A, *niza amang*, B)<sup>1</sup> These run high, and it is possibly for this reason that polygamy is practically unknown. On the rare occasions when a man takes a second wife she is considered to be of definitely inferior status, and he almost always builds a separate house for her. The only man known to me who keeps two wives in the same house is Meshu of Tesophenyu, and the arrangement does not seem to be a very happy one. Village gossip has it that the senior wife keeps him strictly by her side every night from bedtime to dawn, and that to enjoy the favours of his younger wife, who is the daughter of a poor man, he has to meet her secretly in the jungle while her co-wife is busy with other work during the day. They apparently arranged these things better in Victorian days, for Yungta, a very rich man of Tesophenyu who died some twenty years ago, is said to have lived very happily with three wives in the same house. Formerly the whole marriage price was paid in cattle and spearheads. Nowadays the bulk is usually paid in cash, though spearheads must be included or the union will be sterile. These spearheads are a true currency<sup>2</sup> They are of the ordinary Rengma shape, but they are made specially for payment in marriage prices, and are never sharpened or used for any other purpose. A man will sometimes own a rack full of marriage spearheads he has received or inherited, which he or his descendants will in turn pay out in the marriage prices of wives for their sons. At a marriage two spearheads go to the girl's father and one to the girl's mother's eldest brother. This last is paid after consummation, and he makes a return present of meat. He is a most important

<sup>1</sup> The term "marriage price" is retained because it has been used throughout this series of monographs and there is no other suitable and agreed English word. Rengma parents do not sell their daughters (see p. 210). But it appears that Assamese did so many years ago, for it is reported that "the practice of heads of families selling to the highest bidder the persons of their female relatives is unfortunately very prevalent in Assam" (A. J. M. Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, p. 34).

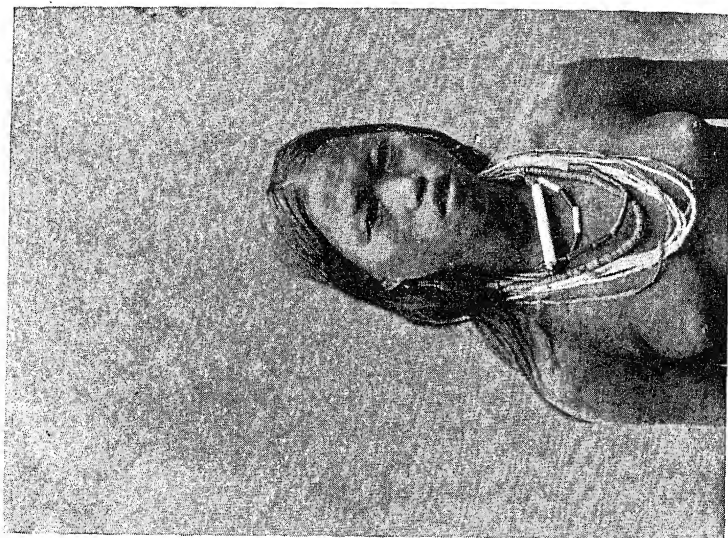
<sup>2</sup> See p. 72.

person, whose enmity is believed to cause sterility, the husband must on no account quarrel with him, and if no children are born will make him a further present, in the hope of thereby causing his wife to conceive<sup>1</sup> If part of the price is paid in cattle and part in cash, the cattle must never include an animal from the plains According to one tradition, men, mithan, Naga cattle and plains cattle originally came out of a hole in the earth in that order As they emerged the hole got smaller and smaller, till it closed behind the representative of plains cattle and nipped off the end of its tail To include an animal of this breed in a marriage price might therefore cause the clan to die out The cash varies according to the dowrie of *khongpsu* beads<sup>2</sup> which the bride brings For a rich man's daughter up to Rs 120 will be paid and for a poor man's daughter Rs 50— or Rs 60 A divorced woman will carry a lower price, and if a widow goes to one of the heirs of her late husband, nothing more will be paid, on the ground that she remains in the family If, however, she goes to another family, the heirs of her late husband will claim from her new husband the price originally paid for her Baptist converts tend to give up old customs, especially if they cost money. Rengma converts still claim and pay marriage prices, I believe, but there is a tendency, which the Mission declines to stop, among Kuki Baptists to let girls go for nothing, in a mistaken spirit of Christian charity It will be a serious thing if this tendency spreads To receive a marriage price for a daughter is in no way an immoral sale of the girl The price is compensation for her leaving the clan, and is of immense moral value Kohima bazaar is full of Naga women who have drifted in to mate with all and sundry All but very, very few are Angamis, or Aos Neither of these tribes take marriage prices, and no one cares if an orphan girl goes off and becomes a prostitute. It merely means one mouth less to feed Were she worth a good lump sum to the nearest heir she would be most carefully looked after and persuaded to marry some decent man in the village, and should he die,

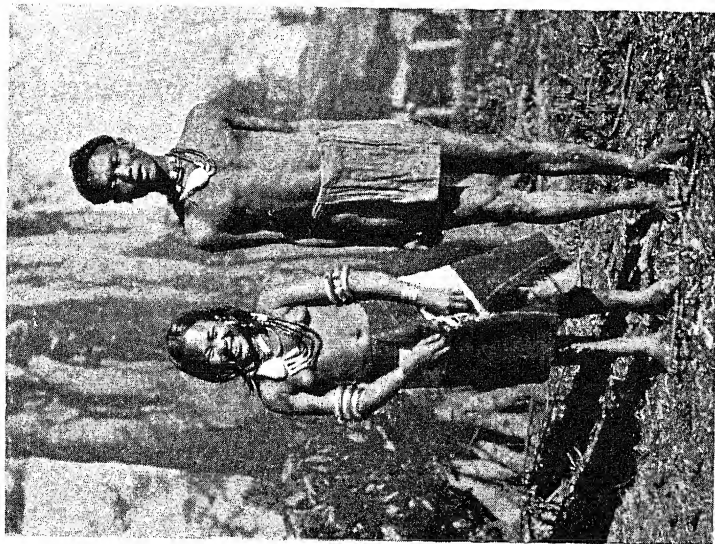
<sup>1</sup> For the special position of the maternal uncle see also p 137.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 35





YOUNG MARRIED WOMAN: WESTERN RENGMA



YOUNG MARRIED COUPLE: WESTERN RENGMA

his heirs would see that she did not go off with any waster who took a fancy to her. That is why there is not a single Rengma girl in the bazaar, and only one or two Lhotas and Semas who have come in for special reasons. Probably quite 95 per cent are Angamis, who live close at hand and cost nothing.

When a marriage has been decided on between a youth and a girl, an old woman acts as go-between for the formal betrothal. If possible she must be the bridegroom's paternal aunt. In the Tesophenyu group she is merely known as the *aketsi kekenowa* ("word asker"), but in the Tseminyu group she is called the *tekweng kezinggu* ("banana-leaf divider"), because she goes to the bride's house in the evening, taking with her a spearhead and a bamboo cup of rice-beer from the bridegroom's father to the bride's father, and on receiving an affirmative answer to her formal request she tears up banana leaves and sticks them into the outer wall of the house, one piece for each relation, male or female, on each side. These are seen in the morning and taken by the village as a formal announcement of the engagement. On the day of the old woman's visit both households are "genna," and no member may speak to a stranger or touch cotton. About a week later the girl and her parents go and drink in the bridegroom's father's house. This visit is returned by the bridegroom and his father. Then the bridegroom, with his parents and paternal aunt, leads a cow to his future father-in-law's house and pays it over as a first instalment of the marriage price, though the full price has not yet been settled. The engagement is now binding, however. One, two, or even three years later the marriage itself is planned. Of this the most important preliminary is the final settlement of the marriage price. For this the bride's parents give a lavish feast<sup>1</sup> to which all the relations on both sides are invited. The girl's father begins by asking as much as he dare, and the youth's father by protesting it is too much. The wrangling that goes on is not

<sup>1</sup> In some villages the negotiations are carried on privately, and these big feasts are discontinued by all but the very rich, for reasons of economy.



all real, for it is not etiquette for the parents themselves to come to a final settlement. This is done by an experienced man who acts as an intermediary. He prepares his ground carefully. Knowing everyone on either side well, he is aware who are the greediest and meanest, and sees that they are plied with liquor till their interest in the proceedings is of the slightest. Then, with only reasonable men left in full possession of their senses, he fixes a price which both sides accept as reasonable. This is always Rs 10 more than the price which will be actually paid, for by letting his daughter go for less than the sum agreed on her father avoids the stigma of selling her. When the parties belong to different villages, the bridegroom goes to the bride's village with men of his own clan and of his mother's clan, and men who have married women of his clan. When all have well drunken, men of the bride's village try to seize the visitors' property, and a friendly fight takes place in which no ill-will is shown. Really valuable property, such as ivory armlets, is not taken, but cloths and small ornaments are torn from their owners and cannot be claimed back. Indeed, it is required by custom that some property at least should be seized from the visitors. A similar fight sometimes takes place when the two parties belong to the same village, but nothing more than a cloth or two is ever taken, and it is not required by custom that anything should be taken at all. The actual payment of the price is left till later, and instalments are often spread over many years. Meanwhile the bridegroom builds his house, and the wedding is arranged to take place before the big *Lo tsung nga* ("field clearing feast") in March,<sup>1</sup> which marks the beginning of the agricultural operations for the year, and after which it is tabu to marry.<sup>2</sup> On the day the house is finished the young couple and the girl's mother bring food and rice-beer, and eat and drink a little in it, usually in dead silence, because the girl and the youth are too embarrassed to talk.

<sup>1</sup> See p 80

<sup>2</sup> Western Angamis may not marry after the first cuckoo is heard. This bird is apparently identical with the familiar English migrant. Its northern limit in the Naga Hills is said to be Therugu Hill. It is therefore of no importance to Rengmas as a marker of seasons.

A fire is also lighted. The hearth-stones are ready, and fuel is laid between them. The bridegroom makes a little heap of thatching-grass a few feet away from the real hearth and lights it with a fire-stick<sup>1</sup>. From this he lights the fuel on the hearth, but he must not put any more wood on or push up the ends of half-burnt sticks into the fire, or his property will be quickly consumed. After this the marriage can take place as soon as is convenient. On three successive nights<sup>2</sup> the bridegroom's paternal aunt goes to summon the girl and her parents to his parents' house. On the first and second night she must refuse to go, or she will not live long. On the third night the girl and her parents obey the summons, and both families feast together. This over, the young couple go off to begin their married life in their new house. But it is very far from being a case of "alone at last". In villages of the Tesophenyu group the paternal aunt leads the way, followed by the bride with a bamboo cup of fermented rice in her right hand and her own dish in her left. With her is a girl friend. This girl friend sleeps on her bed for three nights, while the husband sleeps apart. She remains there three days, and lights and keeps up the fire, pounds the rice and brings the water. This is not in order to give the young couple a short respite from household tasks, but because if the wife were to do these things the property would soon be used up. During these three days the girl's parents may not come to her house and she may not go to theirs. This is to signify that she is leaving her own clan for good and all, and going to another. On the first night there is no cooking to be done, for the couple have had their evening meal at the bridegroom's father's house<sup>3</sup>. Next day, however, he lights the fire exactly as he did on the day the house was finished. He cannot push sticks up into it, or his property will be consumed as the sticks are. So short lengths of stick are cut that he can throw on whole if need be.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> During this time another spearhead must be paid to the girl's father as an instalment of the marriage price.

<sup>3</sup> Till the following *Ngada* ceremony a newly married person may not eat venison (lest a tiger kills one of the couple), dog's flesh, and, of vegetables, black oil seed or fungus. The last two are believed to cause leprosy to brides and bridegrooms.

But the fire is usually kept up by the girl attendant on the bride. At the end of three days she can go, taking with her a basket of rice for her trouble. In the Tseminyu group of villages the young couple are even more closely attended, three or four girls sleeping round the bride and two or three boys from the "morung" round the bridegroom. These stay for any period up to three months, the husband and wife meanwhile occupying separate beds. The marriage can be legally consummated when three days are over if opportunity offers, but usually this is postponed till the couple no longer have separate beds, and sometimes, I am told, for as long as two years—though the parents on both sides are apt to drop hints if it is put off as long as this<sup>1</sup>. The reason for this remarkably long delay is hard to discover. It is certainly not because young Rengma couples are not in love. It is, I think, due rather to an innate delicacy. "A young girl might so easily be frightened," is how a man put it to me once. One Rengma, a devoted husband, whom I know well, once told me how the spell was broken. One night, after two or three months of marriage, the attendant girls and boys were very late coming to the house. The man and his wife spoke a word to each other, and when the attendants came a little later they were told they were no longer wanted. This is probably what usually happens. No man would think of attempting to have connection with his wife during her monthly period. Were he to do so he would never again enjoy good fortune. A woman in this state sleeps on a mat on the floor for one night and eats apart from her husband for ten days in some clans and for three in others.

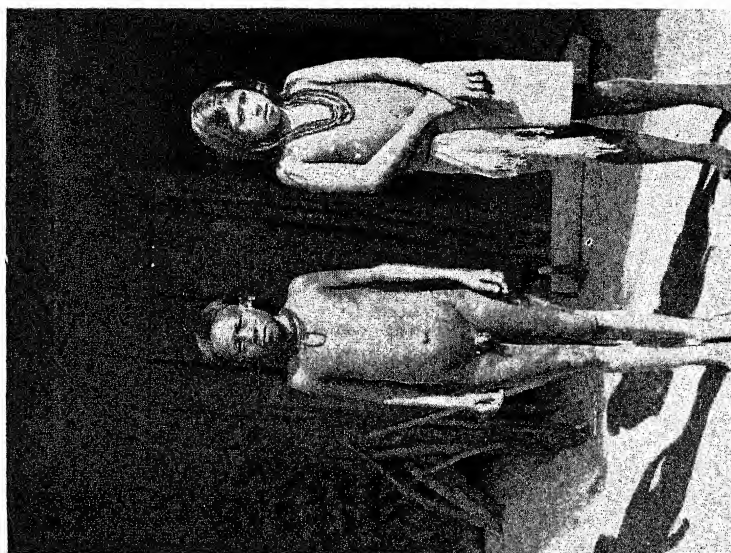
Within a month of marriage a simple ceremony is performed which finally separates the girl from her clan and attaches her to that of her husband, enabling her to go to his granary. This she could not do while she was in any sense a stranger. First an old man comes with two young chickens, one for each of the couple, and sacrifices them with a prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Among the Lakhers too a husband and wife sleep apart for at least a month and sometimes for as long as a year (Parry, *The Lakhers*, p. 303 and note).





EASTERN RENGMA WEARING *AZOKHA* NECKLACE



YOUNG MARRIED COUPLE : EASTERN RENGMA

[To face page 213.]

for good fortune. A few days later the bride goes down to the village spring in the middle of the afternoon, a time when she is unlikely to meet anyone there. She washes thoroughly, first her head, then her arms and then her body and legs. Finally she holds the two bottom corners of her skirt against the two upper ones and pours water into her lap. She then makes a wisp of nine kinds of twigs, waves it in the air to brush away all evil, and throws it away with a prayer for health and wealth. This removes any taint of her old clan which may have clung to her. In the Tesophenyu group an additional ceremony is held that night to symbolise the final union of husband and wife. The girl shuts the door of her house when she comes up from the spring and kills and cooks a hen. After her meal she goes to her bed. Her husband eats a separate meal outside the closed door, with his spear and "dao" by his hand. He then goes in and lies down by his wife, but may not speak to her.

The marriage customs of the Eastern Rengmas present many contrasts with those of the Western. Children often marry long before puberty, polygamy is frequent, and in Meluri, the biggest of their villages, no marriage prices are paid. One often sees married couples that could not possibly total twenty years between them. It is particularly common for a rich man's son to be married when he is a mere child. His father arranges it because he can afford to set him up with a house and property. His wife will be of the same age, the daughter of someone who is glad to take the chance of a good match for her. These little couples live very happily, for they are children together. There is none of the obscenity of a grown man marrying a little girl. Child marriages of this kind are usually arranged. A man's second marriage is always to a woman of his own choice, a widow or divorced wife. The two wives live in the same house, and use the same hearth, but the first is definitely senior. Second marriages of this kind are not uncommon, especially in Meluri. Marriage prices to the equivalent of thirty to forty rupees are paid in Sahunyu and Lephori, but currency spears are not given. Meluri is the only example I know of a village in which the custom of paying marriage

prices has died out in comparatively modern times. In the old days a rich man's daughter cost as much as four or five buffaloes. Now no payment is made till after a woman's death, when her family receives a "dao," an axe and one "jhum" field. No explanation is given for this change. One can only suppose that the marriage price was so often cancelled by cross-marriage that it died out.

The actual marriage ceremony is simple. An old woman acts as a go-between, and when the marriage has been definitely arranged the bridegroom gives five cakes of salt to the bride. This is regarded as a sign that the couple are definitely engaged. The bride's family in return kill a large pig and give presents of pork to the bridegroom's family. On that day he must come and drink in his future father-in-law's house. Next day the bridegroom's family kill a pig, and the bride and her family come and eat and drink with them. The actual marriage takes place the following cold weather, and at first the young couple do not set up a separate establishment, but live in the bridegroom's father's house. She goes there in procession in the evening, accompanied by girl friends, and must step over the threshold with her right foot first. The bride herself carries nothing, but one girl carries five pieces of wood in a basket to symbolise the firewood the young bride will have to cut and carry home, and others carry presents of meat and rice. No thread or cotton is brought. That evening all the women in the village join the bride in a feast in her father-in-law's house of which no man may partake at all. When they have gone the bride sleeps in the house with her girl friends, and her husband goes to another house for the night. He returns next day and they begin their life together, but sleep on separate beds for several months. Unless there is a big family already in the house no separate room is screened off for them. About a year later, in the cold weather, the parents move to another house unless the son asks them not to do so. Should the son not exercise his right of turning him out, the father must find a site for him elsewhere. Here he builds a new house, and on the day the hearth-stones are set up to mark its completion he sacrifices a fowl and

takes his wife to it, the couple keeping " genna " for that day

Divorce is commoner in the Tesophenyu group than elsewhere in the tribe. In the Tseminyu group it is definitely rare. In Eastern Rengma villages it is fairly common, but a woman who has been divorced more than once or twice is looked at askance and has difficulty in finding a decent man to marry her. Divorce is allowed for misconduct or incompatibility of temperament, but couples in areas where it is rare usually make an honest effort to get on. One Rechante of Tseminyu is said not to have spoken to his wife for three years, and to have become reconciled to her at the end of it. In that group if the woman is to blame, her family return her marriage price and pay a fine of Rs 10. She is allowed to take with her her clothes, all the thread there is in the house and such of her dowry as has not been used for the joint support of the couple. If the man is to blame he can claim back none of the marriage price he has paid, and must return the whole of the woman's dowry and property and pay a fine of Rs 10. The custom in the Tesophenyu group is similar, save that no dowry is returned in any case. Among the Eastern Rengmas the man can seize all his wife's property and demand repayment of her marriage price if she leaves him without due cause. If he turns her out, all joint property is equally divided, and he forfeits the marriage price. The above customs are very fair in theory, but very difficult to apply in practice. In most matrimonial quarrels both sides are more or less to blame, and yet a decision, with the whole marriage price at stake, has to be made as to which is primarily responsible for the trouble.

#### *Funeral Ceremonies*

The funeral ceremonies of the Western and Eastern Rengmas differ widely, and among the former there are noticeable divergencies between clans of the Tseminyu and Tesophenyu groups. In the Tseminyu group when a man on his death-bed loses consciousness frantic efforts are made to call back his soul as long as the corpse is warm. When the body becomes cold all hope is given up, and prepara-



tions are made for the funeral, which has to take place as soon as possible in the climate of Assam. First, all the assembled clansmen have a meal. This does not mean they are callous, but is necessary because once the funeral rites have begun no one taking part in them may eat for the rest of the day. The body is laid out on the bed and washed by the village burier (*Sigha kethngu*).<sup>1</sup> A little parcel of rice wrapped in a leaf is put in the dead man's left hand for him to eat on his way to the Land of the Dead. Next the burier puts tufts of cotton wool, the purpose of which is not known, over each ear and between the big and second toes of each foot. This done, he washes the cloths in which the corpse will be laid out, really washing the old and dirty ones, but only dipping the edges of the new ones in water to make them ceremonially pure. Any beads, too, which the corpse will wear must be restrung. A little chicken is then selected to go ahead of the dead man and scratch and find water for him on the Road of the Dead.<sup>2</sup> A small stick is tied to its leg, and it is allowed to wander over the corpse, which is now laid out on a plank between the hearth and the door, with feet to the door, and a pillow of folded cloths under the head. The ceremony of eating the funeral food (*synyenphu*) then takes place. The senior surviving member of the household hands the burier a small basket of husked rice. From this he selects one unbroken grain for each member of the household, and tying them all up in a leaf, puts them in a pot of water on the fire for a minute and pretends to cook them. He then opens the leaf, and each member of the family in order of seniority takes a grain and presses it against his chin and says, "There must be no more deaths. I do not wish to eat for the dead again. It is finished," and puts it back in the leaf, which is hidden in the jungle when the family wash at the village spring after the funeral. The body is then buried at the clan burial-place (*sikar tso*, "grave-stone") in the village street.<sup>3</sup> A big clan may own several of these, which are large platforms of stone, with

<sup>1</sup> See p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> For a description of Tangkhul Naga burial vaults see Pettigrew, *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1909.

graves under them. Each fresh burial is made at the edge of the existing platform, which is extended over it. Husbands and wives are usually buried side by side. One would expect that this system of extending existing platforms would lead in time to the whole free surface of the village being covered with them, but in practice this does not happen. Graves round the edges of the platform get neglected in time, and stones collapse and are lost <sup>1</sup>. It is quite in order to use such a spot for another interment, and in practice the platforms do not seem to increase at all. Sometimes, too, a man is buried outside the village at his special request <sup>2</sup>. A large grave is dug about four feet deep, and in the middle at the bottom a smaller excavation is made just large enough to take the corpse. If the dead man has killed dangerous game, a dog is tied up near the body in the house. This will go barking in front of the dead man and frighten from his path the spirits of the animals he has killed. It is therefore killed by a blow on the head <sup>3</sup> at the moment that the body is carried through the door feet first, amid the weeping of relatives and preceded by a formal friend (*asingu*) flourishing a "dao" and a spear, and calling on the dead man not to be afraid, as he will clear all enemies from his path for him. A mat is put at the bottom of the grave, and on it the dead person is laid, swathed in cloths. If the body is that of a man, a spear, with point to the feet, is laid along the right side, and a "dao," three "panjis," and a fire-stick, with thong and tinder, on the left. Nothing except her clothes and beads is buried with a woman. Flat stones are then laid across the small excavation in which the corpse is, and the earth is filled in. When this is finished a stake is driven into the

<sup>1</sup> A man whose children, crops and cattle do not flourish as they should will often repair his father's grave. This appeases the angry spirit.

<sup>2</sup> In Therugunyu and Thegwepegedenyu it is more usual to bury outside than inside the village, and for great men wooden figures, complete with clothes, ornaments and weapons, are put up after the Angami fashion (see illustration facing p. 227 of *Angami Nagas*). Sometimes only the top of the post is carved to represent a head, and sometimes mithan heads and conventionalised "tails" are added at the bottom.

<sup>3</sup> In ancient Mexico the domestic *techichi* was similarly killed to accompany its master (Spence, quoting Clavigero, *Magic and Mysteries of Mexico*, p. 109).

soft earth and the small chicken which is to find water for the dead man is buried alive in the hole so made. It then only remains to pave the top of the grave with flat stones level with the main platform<sup>1</sup>. On the stones are put the dead man's cup, full of rice-beer,<sup>2</sup> and his weapons and clothes, all except the cup of rice-beer being removed after three days. On the next day but one after the funeral fire is brought from the house and put on the grave. At the head of the grave a split reed is put up and three banana-leaf cups of rice-beer are fastened to it. These cups are left there all day, but are removed and very carefully hidden at sunset lest an enemy steal them. Were anyone to do so and give someone of the dead man's clan some of the rice-beer mixed in another drink, the whole clan would become extinct. On this day, too, a hen which has never laid an egg is sacrificed in the house. The liver is taken out, put on a leaf, and cooked in the ashes. While still on the leaf, and without being touched by hand, it is cut in two with a bamboo knife and put in a basket with some cooked rice for the soul of the dead man. The basket is hung up in the house. If no hen of the right kind can be found, a small fish called *hepechong* is cooked and cut up. When they are ripe, taro and gourds are often offered on the grave, but never rice, as that would draw away supplies of this staple crop from survivors of the family on earth<sup>3</sup>. At the annual *Ngada* ceremony offerings of rice-beer are made at the graves of all persons whose descendants still care for them, but a man may not make an offering at the grave of someone who bore the same name as himself.

Clans of the Tesophenyu group do not eat before a funeral, as they are allowed to have a meal later in the day, when all is over. Nor do they put cotton wool over the ears or be-

<sup>1</sup> A grave dug in the rains often has a light thatch shelter built over it to keep the rain off the dead man.

<sup>2</sup> The custom of offering food and drink to the dead dies hard. It was intended to bury with Napoleon a silver jug of water, a plate, knife, fork and spoon, with some bread, but there was no room for the jug and bread in the coffin.—From a letter dated May 10th, 1821, printed in *The Sunday Times*, of December 30th, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Such is the reason given. More probably taro is offered because it was the staple diet before rice was introduced.

tween the toes, or rice in the dead man's hand. The little chicken that is to scratch for water on the road of the dead is put in a basket and killed and thrown away when the corpse leaves the house, instead of being buried alive. The dead man is not left dependent on what water the chicken may find. He has to be given the wherewithal to buy some if need be, and for this purpose a pinch of salt wrapped in a piece of banana-leaf is put between the first and second fingers of each hand and a bead tied to the middle finger of the left hand. Clothes and ornaments are not put upon the grave. Instead, on the second day after the burial, offerings of food and drink and little model clothes, ornaments, weapons, etc., are hung from a bar on the outside of the front wall of the dead man's house.

After the death of a Western Rengma who has taken heads or killed big game a memorial (*repekede*, A, *ay ketogtu*, B) is sometimes put up outside the village. Stumps of tree fern hanging from bamboos represent heads, wooden spears commemorate raids, and very roughly carved blocks of wood give the tally of the game killed.

The customs of the Eastern differ widely from those of the Western Rengmas. They have no clan burial-places, and the semicircular stone monuments only made in honour of the rich by the Western Rengmas<sup>1</sup> are invariably built at every funeral by the Eastern. No effort is made to call back the soul of a dying man. As soon as life is extinct the body is washed by the nearest relatives and laid out on the bed. No chicken is killed to find water on the way to the land of the dead, but a bead is tied to the left wrist, so that water may be bought on the way. Young children are buried in the floor of the house under the bed or in any corner where the ground is soft enough to dig and the grave will not be trampled on, but adults either under the eaves outside the house or in the street just in front. The digging is begun by the oldest man of the clan—the man to whom go the heads of all game killed—and is carried on by male relatives. The grave (*arokhu*) is cut in a slanting direction, so that there is undisturbed ground immediately above the

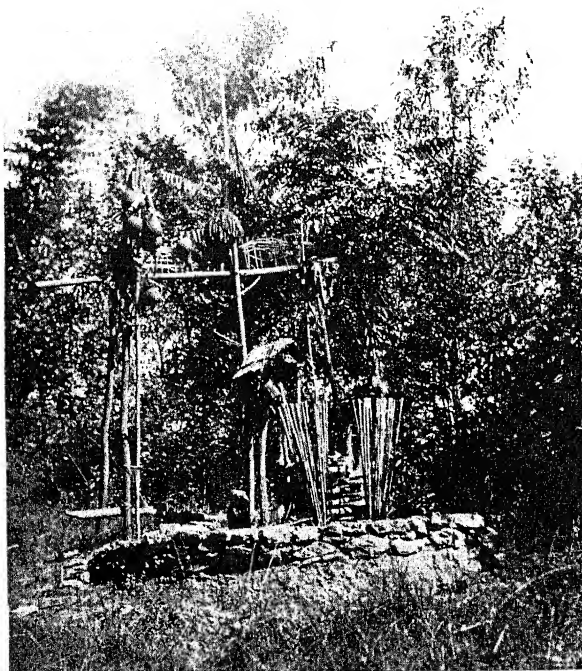
<sup>1</sup> See p. 195

corpse This is wrapped in cloths and laid on a plank All the beads worn by the dead man are on his body. Two gourds of rice-beer are placed at the head of the corpse, and, if it be that of a man, a "dao" and a spear (not reversed) at the right hand, and, if it be that of a woman, a "dao" for cutting, and an axe for splitting, firewood Another plank is then placed on edge shutting the corpse into its niche, and the grave is filled in with earth Nothing is put on it On the day after the burial a dog is killed for a man in order that it may go ahead and frighten away from his path the spirits of men and animals he has killed Pigs are slain in accordance with the wealth of the chief mourners The main task of the day is the building of a rough semicircular stone platform (*asuthe*) on the path from the village to the fields,<sup>1</sup> from whence the spirit of the dead man will watch and bless the crops and those who work in them For the spirit there is built on the platform a tiny house on very high piles, with a small bin containing a little of every kind of edible gran in front of it If the dead man has done the buffalo sacrifice in the series of Feasts of Merit, an upright stone about one and a half feet high is planted on his *asuthe* On a man's platform, too, there is always placed a root of hart's-tongue fern (*awunū*), the purpose of which seems to be unknown, the only explanation ever given being that "it is the custom" Over the little house on the *asuthe* is erected a wooden frame about eight feet high from which are hung gourds representing the heads of enemies the deceased has killed or helped to kill, the skulls of game he has got, and animals sacrificed by him during his lifetime, and bunches of taro, edible gourds, etc In front of the *asuthe* reeds are stuck in the ground, representing the women with which he has had love affairs<sup>2</sup> It is not uncommon to find thirty or more<sup>3</sup> Each straight reed represents a woman and each

<sup>1</sup> In Sahunyu an *asuthe* usually consists merely of a roof supported by four posts, with the miniature soul-house beside it.

<sup>2</sup> See *Sema Nagas*, p. 246, note The Tesophenyu group of Western Rengmas also sometimes put up a tally of reeds at an *ayr ketogu*, but the Tsemnyu group never do so

<sup>3</sup> The most remarkable funeral monument I ever saw was outside the Eastern Angami village of Jessami in Manipur State. On it were thirty wooden figures representing enemies killed on raids for which the dead



FUNERAL MONUMENT (*asuthe*), EASTERN RENGMA,  
SHOWING OFFERINGS, SPIRIT HOUSE, AND REEDS COM-  
MEMORATING INTRIGUES



CLAN GRAVE (*sakar tso*): WESTERN RENGMA

*To face page 220.*



branching reed a mother and daughter with whom he has succeeded in carrying on an intrigue simultaneously. A man on his death-bed tells his friends to how many reeds he is entitled, if there is no one else at hand, he tells his wife, who sees that the right score is recorded. A woman only has one reed in front of her *asuthe*, for her own husband, she naturally says nothing about any other man whose score she may have helped to increase. These reeds do not signify a silly boasting of immorality, for no race of people display flippancy on graves. They indicate how thoroughly a man has fulfilled his purpose in life.<sup>1</sup> After the harvest of the year in which a man died a share of every kind of crop is put in the bin on a man's *asuthe*. For some six days after death at every meal in the dead man's house a portion of food and drink is set aside for him, and put on his bed before the survivors begin their meal. After that his spirit is considered to have finally departed. On the grave a fire is kept alight for two days only, after which time the soul will no longer remain near the body.

To the Rengma in his natural state suicide seems to be absolutely unknown, a striking contrast with the closely allied Lhota.<sup>2</sup> The only known case is that of a Baptist of Tseminyu who shot himself. It is therefore impossible to say how the body of an Animist Rengma would be disposed of in such circumstances. For death by accident, by murder,<sup>3</sup> in childbirth or by any of the unnatural ways commonly spoken of in Assamese as "apotia," the custom is quite clear. Among the Eastern Rengmas only the garments and ornaments actually worn by the dead person are thrown away, and the full funeral ceremonies are carried out, even to the erection of the *asuthe*, though the soul is believed to go to a different Land of the Dead, the whereabouts which are not known. The Western Rengmas are

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man had taken the omens, care being to show the typical Tangkhul hair-cut on the figures representing men of that tribe. Behind the wooden figure were forty-nine small upright stones, each in memory of a woman the dead worthy had seduced. A long flat stone lying on the ground divided the women roughly half and half into married and unmarried.

<sup>1</sup> See Parry, *The Lakhers*, pp. 348 and 397 and note.

<sup>2</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, pp. 20, 82.

<sup>3</sup> Death in war is not "apotia."



stricter, though far less strict than the Lhotas<sup>1</sup> A person dying "apotia" in the village is not carried out through the door of the house in the ordinary way, but through a hole cut in the back of the house He cannot rest in the clan burial-place, but is buried behind the house, with no mat on which to rest A man has only his "dao" buried with him and his spear stuck in the ground by his head No ceremonies of any kind are performed The burial is done by near relatives, who throw away a hair from their heads and a thread from their cloths, while the village buriar waves a bunch of the leaves of the *pezi* (A) or *amozu* (B) tree over the body<sup>2</sup> All personal property intimately connected with the deceased, such as a man's weapons and a woman's loom, are thrown away, but the house is not demolished, nor valuable property, such as money, cattle and rice, abandoned The dead person can never be spoken of by name. When it is necessary to refer to him or her, "Devoured by tiger" or "Dead in childbirth" or some other appropriate term is used

#### *Miscellaneous Beliefs*

Western Rengmas call certain men "men of deadly arm" (*beng kurhunyü*, A, *akwang khunyuwa*, B), and Eastern Rengmas "game-killing men" (*asa keshewa*) It is believed that if a deer or other game is even scratched by the spear of such a man it will fall dead in its tracks Another type of man with even more marvellous properties is unknown to the Eastern Rengmas, but is called "man of bitter flesh" (*ate kekwenyu*, A, *masa kekharwa*, B) by the Western Mutawu of Tesophenyu is quoted as a living example If a snake bites a man of this type it is the snake, not the man, that dies The same thing happens if a giant centipede (*müring*, A, *satata*, B<sup>3</sup>) bites a "man of bitter flesh" It is said that a giant centipede once bit and killed a son of the

<sup>1</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, pp 160-162

<sup>2</sup> It is for this reason that a man caught in the rain takes great care not to include these leaves in the bunch he hurriedly plucks to hold over his head

<sup>3</sup> The Eastern Rengmas call this insect *aserhe* ("dead woman's waist-string"), but give no explanation of the name

god *Songnyu*,<sup>1</sup> who for this crime cursed the species, and said that if ever one came out of its hole it would be killed. It is believed to this day that every giant centipede that emerges from its lair comes to a bad end before it can get back. Once, however, one is said to have saved the life of a man whom a tiger was tracking. The tiger met the centipede and asked him how far ahead the man was and whether there was any chance of catching him. The centipede replied, "I have a hundred legs on each side and I cannot catch him. What possible chance have you got?" So the tiger gave up the chase.

Rengma tradition provides an answer to one or two natural history problems. One might think that tigers, with their few natural enemies, would increase and multiply till they swarmed over the land. That this is not so Rengmas attribute to the roughness of tiger-cubs' tongues. They say that a cub will often lick its mother's nipple completely off. The result is that that cub dies from lack of milk, for the other cubs will not give up the nipples they have appropriated, and the mother can only bring up smaller litters in future. For the lack of increase of gibbons—another animal with few natural enemies—a simpler reason is given—namely, that the female never gives birth to a young one till she herself is about to die. Another obvious problem is why bull elephants should frequently have no tusks. The reason given for this is that elephant public opinion only allows the finest bulls in a herd to mate with the females. If an inferior bull is detected making illicit love, all the elephants in the herd seize him with their trunks and pull his tusks out as a punishment. The bone grows over the sockets, and that is why the skulls of tuskless bulls look as if they had never carried tusks. The pangolin (*tepyu*, A, *asephu*, B, *asuphu*, C) brings very bad luck if met by chance, and may not be followed. It can, however, be dug out with impunity if only its hole is found and the animal itself is not seen above ground. If dug out and killed it may be eaten by Eastern Rengmas of both sexes. Among the Western Rengmas, however, only men may eat it, and must

<sup>1</sup> See p 165

do so apart from their wives. Of the Tepinyu clan <sup>1</sup> even the men may not eat it. This same clan may not burn a certain long leaf called *bapho* (A), *atapaghe* (B), or *alephu* (C). Tigers eat these leaves, it is said, as dogs eat grass, and to burn them would cause tigers to die of purging, "which would be a sin." Eastern Rengmas may burn these leaves in the open air, but never in their houses. Most Nagas seem to think it unlucky to speak admiringly of that lovely bird the scarlet minivet (*zimyu*, A, *sempstü*, B, *tsitotela*, C). The Angamis believe that if it hears a man say "How beautiful!" it will pluck out one of its scarlet feathers with its beak, and one of the speaker's near relations will die. The Western Rengmas say that it was born from the body of a man killed in war, and that anyone who admires it will suffer from severe pains in the stomach. The Eastern Rengmas say that if anyone admires it, it makes the rude retort, "Then go and take your mother's head and buy me." The giant woodlouse is merely regarded as a curious creature. It is called "tiger's eye" (*teme yhetezu*) in the Tseminyu group, "heart touch" (*yipam payi*) in the Tesophenyu group, because when touched it curls up into a ball like a heart, and just "roller" (*nguli*) by the Eastern Rengmas.

Supernatural power of attraction is attributed to the python (*sheng*, A, *awüing*, B, *ashumi*, C). Not only do the Western Rengmas say that its gall will cure both wounds and coughs, but that a tooth kept in the house will prevent chickens from straying, and will even attract neighbours' too. A small glittering object is said to be found in a python's head from which a love-charm is produced by rather a long process. If kept in a jar in the house it will turn into nettles and then into tobacco, and so on, through a series of plants, till one called *gunu* (A), with a leaf like garlic, is produced. A man has only to touch a woman with a piece of the last plant and she is his for ever. The Eastern Rengmas believe vaguely that a love-charm can be produced from a python, but no one seems to know the process. If they kill one they always cut off the head and leave it in the

<sup>1</sup> See p. 13.

jungle If ants come to it the crops will be good, and if they avoid it the crops will be bad

The Eastern Rengmas appear to be happily free from leprosy, but the Western believe it to be due to maggots, which enter and devour the body of the sufferer, and call it "maggot-devoured illness" (*nyu nlu kethu*, A, *aphela arha ketsowa*, B)

Strangers are naturally considered liable to bring evil magic with them If one comes and settles in a village of the Tseminyu group a day's "genna" is observed The Eastern Rengmas do likewise, but only if the stranger brings his cooking-pots and dishes with him If he comes empty-handed no notice is taken In the Tseminyu group a day's "genna" is also observed if a villager leaves to settle elsewhere, for he may have taken virtue with him

There seems to be no belief in lucky and unlucky numbers Rengmas of both sections agree that it is very unlucky for a man holding a spear if anyone passes under his arm between him and the spear, he will never have luck in hunting again. Nor must a man who has been stung by a certain stinging leaf ever tell his friends If he does, the pain, which is very severe, will continue a day for each person he tells Like all Nagas, the Rengmas consider it a serious offence for a woman to strike a man, a house or the ground with her skirt, a Western Rengma village even observing one day's "genna" if this occurs

So disastrous is a fire in a Rengma village, with its closely packed houses, that the subject is not even spoken of above a whisper, and it is absolutely forbidden to make such a remark as "Suppose our village were burnt" The Eastern Rengmas will demand and accept a fine from men of their own or another village for firing jungle and so ruining it for "jhumung" till it recovers But the Western Rengmas, up to the time their country was administered, would accept no such fines,<sup>1</sup> preferring to suffer continual damage to their "jhumung" land rather than offend vague forces by inflicting

<sup>1</sup> To this day Angamis will on no account accept fines for jungle-burning, and as a result their "jhumung" land is being slowly ruined by fires in the dry spring months

punishment for fires in the jungle, and thereby risk the terrible punishment of fires in the villages. Nowadays fines are demanded and taken from other villages for "jhum" fires which are allowed to get out of control and spread, but the money is still regarded as tainted, it is never brought into the village, but is hidden in the jungle outside, and is used to pay communal fines which may be inflicted on the inhabitants. As a general protective measure every Western Rengma village observes one day's "genna" for fire (*T'sorokendu kennu*, A, *Yuekhu kechenna*, B) in the middle of January, at the beginning of the time of year when the risk of fires is greatest. The Eastern Rengmas have no such "genna," and say they wish they knew of one to keep! The best special precaution to take in a house is to hang up a pangolin's tail. No reason is given why this should be believed to be efficacious, but it is probably because the scales of that animal are so resistant to fire. Should these measures prove ineffective and a fire break out, everyone throws an egg into it. This is not so much with the idea of putting it out, as of removing all ill luck from the thrower, and so of saving his property. When a village is burnt out all neighbouring villages must help at once with supplies of mats and thatching grass with which temporary shelters can be made while the houses are being rebuilt. Death by fire is an "apotia" death, and no animal burnt either in a "jhum" or village fire may be eaten.

Omens are taken in various ways. Chickens are strangled and the position of their legs is observed,<sup>1</sup> or their intestines are examined.<sup>2</sup> For hunting the Western Rengmas usually employ the Lhota method<sup>3</sup> of cutting chips from a green reed or twig and observing how they fall. For war the Eastern Rengmas take the omens by cutting a bamboo thong half through and straining it round the big toe till it breaks. If a fibre projects from the piece held in the right hand it is a good omen, for that is the hand in which the spear is held. For hunting omens two twigs about an inch long are dropped together. If they fall with one crossing the other, game

<sup>1</sup> See p. 62<sup>2</sup> See p. 183<sup>3</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, pp. 46, 127

will be killed. If they touch but do not cross, game will be found but probably not got. If they fall apart, the omens are bad and the hunter will return home empty-handed. Besides omens deliberately taken, Rengmas pay great regard to many chance omens. For instance, it is very lucky for a man to see a snake when on his way to buy cattle, he will get a bargain. A very common bird in the hills is the white-crested laughing-thrush (*ngo*, A, *cheyepoyo*, B, *chenikhupu*, C). It lives in small flocks which send up a chorus of shrill cackles whenever a man or animal approaches them. It is only natural, therefore, that all Nagas should regard as an omen the direction from which a traveller hears their call, though tribes by no means agree on the interpretation. For instance, Rengmas all regard it as lucky when heard on the right, while Eastern Angamis hold the left to be the lucky side. Another bird of which the cry is carefully listened to is the scimitar babbler (*ngokoho*, A, *awke'a*, B, *shukukuru*, C). They usually go about in pairs. If only one is heard the Western Rengmas say no meaning can be attached to it, but the Eastern say it foretells misfortune. The Western Rengmas regard two birds of this species calling quietly to one another on the right as lucky and on the left as unlucky, the Eastern say that if heard above the path the omen is good, and bad if below the path, to hear a pair quarrelling in any direction is unlucky. Similarly, the Western Rengmas say that to hear a pair of a small brown bird with a long tail called *charichara* (A), or *tandenla* (B), is lucky, but if one is heard chattering by itself the hearer will have a quarrel with someone. In the old days one of the best-known omens was that taken from the Eastern face of the hill on which Tesophenyu stands. The ground falls sheer, and if a landslip occurred on it any year it was believed that the Rengmas would get the heads of many Sema women from the villages on the opposite ranges. In a Rengma village an owl is believed to hoot in a peculiar way when it sees in a vision a fresh grave being dug. A hoot of this kind foretells death, as does a certain bird if it sits on the head-tree and screeches. A man can foretell his own death from a certain creeper called *mendilu*, "rootless,"

(A) or *keshu tenyi tsu*, "dead men's milk string" (B), which sends down long tendrils from the boughs of trees to the ground. They are easily broken, and if, when a man pulls one, a long piece comes away, he will live long, if the tendril breaks just above his hand, his days are numbered.

### *Tiger-men*

Rengmas, like other Naga tribes,<sup>1</sup> believe that certain men and women are in some mysterious way connected with individual tigers and leopards. They feel as their animal does, behave as it does, and die when it dies. It is believed that if a tiger connected with a man in this way be wounded, a wound will develop on the man to whom it is attached. It is quite certain that when the tiger dies the man dies, but only when he hears of his animal's death. Tiger-men of various tribes have shown me scars on their bodies due to wounds on their tigers, and have told me, in the most matter-of-fact way, in which direction their tigers were at the time of talking. Such people, called *temi khamkwanyu* (A), *atemi kechungwa* (B), or *amicheri* (C), never seem to have been common among the Rengmas, and there are none at the present time, though one may develop any day. It is believed that the soul of a man who is about to acquire these curious powers goes and drinks at a secret spring of red water called Khuzu,<sup>2</sup> which is said by some to be in the cliffs on the east side of Therugu Hill. From the time the soul drinks, the tiger attachment develops, and the man must observe the same food restrictions as a medicine-man. By breaking these he can break the connection. The last Western Rengma tiger-man was Hillo of Thegwepegedenyu, who died in 1927. His widow told me he used to become alarmingly violent at night when his tiger was killing, and that when it had a full stomach he would sleep all day and refuse to go to his work in the fields. She also said that his lip was badly

<sup>1</sup> Cf *Sema Nagas*, pp 200 sqq, *Angami Nagas*, pp 243, 244, *Lhota Nagas*, pp 164, 165,  *Ao Nagas*, pp 247 sqq. Garo tradition tells of a whole tribe of tiger-men at Rangtaturi-Samegaru near Boko in the Kamrup district. See "A Traditional Account of the Garos," by Dewan Sing Rongmuti, *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Vol I, No 2, p 57.

<sup>2</sup> Cf *Angami Nagas*, p 243.

torn when his tiger fought with another, and that when a man shot at his tiger from behind he developed a wound on the buttocks. The last Eastern Rengma tiger-man was Nyense of Sahunyu, who died many years ago when his tiger was killed at Akhegwo. The most vivid memory of him that his village seem to cherish is an exceedingly obscene remark made to him by an interpreter in Kohima.<sup>1</sup>

### *Luck-stones*

The Rengma greatly prizes certain stones (*tegwo*, A, *avu*, B, *avu* or *azyu*, C). Among the Eastern Rengmas they are owned only by clans and individuals,<sup>1</sup> but the Western have village stones, "morung" stones and clan stones, as well as private stones. One stone, called *Therushing*, is regarded as the property of the whole tribe, as it stands close to where the original village was founded on Therugu hill. Up to about 1929 Therugunyu village used to sacrifice a cock to it every year, but I believe they have ceased to do so since they moved to a new site lower down the spur. It will be convenient if I describe in turn the stones of Tseminyu and Tesophenyu, the biggest villages of the Southern and Northern sections of the group respectively. The most sacred of the Tseminyu village stones is called *Tegwo Kepega*.<sup>2</sup> It is kept hidden on a cliff outside the village, and may only be seen by men who have done the head-taking ceremony, whose duty it is to wash it yearly at the *Zu kul*.<sup>3</sup> ceremony. It is believed to be full of magic of great potency. It was found many generations ago in the low hills to the west of Tseminyu. Other villages claimed it, but they were tricked out of it, and seven Tseminyu men carried it in triumph up to the village. Their triumph was short-lived, for so great was its power that all these seven men lost their lives in raids within a short time. At first

<sup>1</sup> In Meluri, where there are "morungs," stones which have proved too potent for private possession are deposited in them. These are few in number.

<sup>2</sup> There is, as a matter of fact, another stone even more sacred, but I was told about it only under a promise that I would never reveal the secret or write about it.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 174.



the stone was placed on the east side of the village, but it began to disturb people in dreams, saying that it wanted its wife, *Tegwo Kepestu*, who could not find it there. It was accordingly moved to the west side of the village, where it still is. There it is visited in spirit by its wife, which was lying near it in the jungle when it was first found, but was too heavy to carry up. From it the fortune of the village for the year can be foretold. If there are ashes on it, there will be a village fire, if a stick lies on it, someone will be killed by a fall from a tree, if there are toothmarks on it, a tiger will claim a victim. It is said that at the big Angami attack on Tseminyu that took place just before the area was taken over<sup>1</sup> the fugitives who fled in that direction were saved, and the Angamis who followed became hopelessly bewildered and were killed. Another special stone which is kept hidden outside the village, is called *Gu Kegha Pemb* ("mithan-sacrifice pounding-table"). As its name implies, it is flat. It was found by a woman called Zilu when the Rengmas were still concentrated in their parent village on Therugu hill, and brought her great wealth. Another famous stone called *Singnyu Khandrang tso* ("The stone of Khandrang the stranger") lies on the path leading from the Government bridle-path to Tsokonkonyu, where it runs along the crest of a ridge, with a sheer cliff on one side. It is obviously a small monolith. There used to be two, mother and son, but the mother stone was thrown down the cliff about 1925 by some person unknown. The story, known even in distant Angami villages, is that a man took to wife a woman from a strange village. He treated her badly, and she ran away with her little son and died where the stone now lies. The little boy played by the dead body of his mother, and was always trying to crawl to the edge of the cliff to pluck a wonderful flower, but a gust of wind always drove him back. He would climb onto his mother's body and suck her dry breasts, but he got weaker and weaker, and when the body of the mother decayed he was impaled on one of her ribs and died. Both were then turned to stone. A man once tried to drag them apart, but the woman

<sup>1</sup> See pp 154 *sqq.*

appeared to him in a dream and told him her story and sang the following song —

<i>Singnyu</i>	<i>anyu</i>	<i>nnyu</i>				
Stranger	child	born				
<i>Pfu</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>nizungcho</i>	<i>ungwa</i>			
Carrying	lifting	hilltop	becoming			
<i>Mi</i>	<i>koho</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>nyetsi</i>	<i>pyeng</i>	<i>kho</i>	<i>ti</i>
Man	even	man	darling	separate	away	will be
<i>Tse</i>	<i>mi</i>	<i>kho</i>	<i>mmuyale</i>			
But	man	away	unwilling			
<i>Khasa</i>	<i>khi</i>	<i>sangdrumu</i>	<i>thurüchiso</i>			
Plains	on	storm	is coming up			
<i>Nyetsi</i>	<i>su</i>	<i>kebi</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>phynnyho</i>		
Darling	joining	pair	take	have pity		

This may be freely translated

“ I, a stranger, bore a son  
 And carried him to this hilltop.  
 A man tried to tear me from my darling,  
 But I cannot leave him  
 Your deed will bring a storm up from the plains  
 Have pity on us and leave me with my darling ”

A typical example of the sacred stones kept in Tseminyu village is a round one called *Repe* (“ enemy’s head ”) This is kept buried near the head-tree, the ordinary place for village stones Another is called *Songnyu Nwong*, and is shaped like a pestle This, too, is buried near the head-tree Another is called *Repe Keheng Gwo* (“ enemy’s head piercing stone ”), and is shaped like a club It was used for driving through enemies’ heads from ear to ear the cross-stick from which they were suspended It is kept in a hole in the head-tree Besides the village stones there are the “ morung ” luck-stones (*rensi ’vu*) These are kept in pots, closed with flat stones and buried behind the carved post They are examined and washed when the “ morung ” is

rebuilt Usually they are stones which have proved so potent that the finders have become afraid to keep them in their own houses and have handed them over to the "morung" Every "morung" has from two to five They have no individual names, as the village stones have. Round ones are simply called *tegwo* These bring rice and general prosperity Others are called *tekhr* ("kidney"), from their shape These bring game, of which the kidneys are a particularly tasty portion Another kind is called *me thu gwo* ("cattle hoof-stones"), and increases the herds of the "khel" Lastly, there are one or two of the type called *tezū* ("male organ"),<sup>1</sup> and by virtue of these the men of the "khel" have large families Clan stones (*shrbong gwo*) and those of individuals are identical in kind, for the former are simply the luck-stones of families which have died out Such stones are handed over to some old man who will look after them carefully on behalf of the clan Both clan and private stones are kept in pots buried under the floor of the house, and are washed at the annual *Zu kuli* ceremony Quartz crystals (*menzu*) are always prized, and particularly so when marks like grains of rice can be seen in them on holding them up to the light Two together are regarded as husband and wife Other stones, called *shu gwo* ("boiled rice stones"), have marks like grains of rice on them and ensure ample food Another kind called *tamo gwo* ("female member stones") bring a quiver full of children, who, however, are apt to be licentious

Outside Tesophenyu, on the path leading down to Kitagha, there is a haunted stone called *Mezameza avu* It is said that formerly anyone who approached it died in delirium, but nowadays it is regarded as fatal only to cattle, which are consequently never driven up that path The village stones (*anyu vu*) consist mostly of round stones kept in pots buried under the head-tree One large one is called *Ana Vu*

<sup>1</sup> A remarkable phallic stone is preserved in the upper "morung" of the Lhota village of Sakitung Its resemblance to a human penis is striking and, unlike most sacred stones, it can be handled by any man with impunity At dances the young men in turn press it against the front of the women's skirts and chant, "I am having connection with you" The women, with rather shy smiles, admit it is most efficacious in increasing their fertility

("boiled rice stone"), on account of the food it brings to the village. Another is long in shape, and is called *Aniza Hanyu* ("spirit rice pounder"). A third is *Ayi* ("enemy's head"), and brings success in war. Another is called *Akheyar Ketsu* (*penis erectus*), and brings children to the village. All the above are buried under the head-tree, in pots if they are not too large, and are looked at only at the *Akhu khemeta kesa* ceremony, which takes place once in seven years.<sup>1</sup> Then they are counted in the presence of the old men only, and it is announced if they have had children and increased.<sup>2</sup> They are then washed with water drawn in the very early morning, before anyone has made it muddy, replaced in pots and reburied till the ceremony comes round again. Also under the head-tree, buried under a heap of stones, is kept the *Ayi Kezong Zi* ("enemy's head piercing hammer"), with which a stick was hammered through a head taken on a raid before it was hung up. It was, of course, taken out and used when necessary, and not kept buried for seven years. For anyone to touch it involves one day's "genna" for the village. Most of the "morung" stones (*azughu avu*) are of the ordinary type, being stones which have proved too potent to be kept in private houses. There are, however, one or two well-known individual stones. One, called simply *avu*, is T shaped, and brings both good crops and success in war. Another, round, with white veins, is called *ayi avu* ("enemy's head stone"). It was found long ago, lying in a nest it had made on the ground, by a party returning from a raid on the Lhota village of Lungsa. A man called Kwenta picked it up and carried it home, but an awful storm burst on the party, and they all died within two years. Another was found by a woman called Simu about four generations ago. Going to the edge of the village at night to answer a call of nature, the story is that she saw a bright light in the direction of Phesinyu. The light came towards her and dropped on her foot a black stone with a greasy, highly polished surface. She knew it was something magic, and picked it up and took it to her husband Shatsu. He was afraid to take it into the

<sup>1</sup> See pp 176 sqq

<sup>2</sup> Cf *Lhota Nagas*, p 124

house, so he put it down outside and went back to bed to dream about it. The stone appeared to him in his dreams, and said it would bring children and crops to the village, but that it had always lived in a "morung" at Phesinyu, whence it had come, and so must be given a home in a "morung" at Tesophenyu. Another well-known stone is *Zamwa avu* ("the Zamwa family stone"). If it is found clean when examined, weeds in the fields will be few. "Morung" stones are not only examined at the *Akhu khemeta kesa* ceremony, but also every time the "morung" is rebuilt and the carved post, behind which they are buried in pots, is renewed. Clan stones (*amur avu*—"ancestors' stones") are kept buried in pots in the house of an old man. Clan stones and private stones are examined and washed at the *Akhu khemeta kesa* ceremony, just as village stones are. One type shaped like a kidney is called *asa amakam avu* ("game kidneys stones"), these are especially valuable for the luck they bring in hunting. Two kinds called *nza atsongke avu* ("female genitals stones") and *mpoza atsongke avu* ("male genitals stones") bring children. Two other kinds, called *ana vu* ("rice stones") and *awu vu*, bring bumper crops and ample food.<sup>1</sup> These two types are owned both by clans and individuals. Both are believed to breed. The first type has marks like grains of rice on it. Of this one of the most powerful was found by Zibethang in a nest in a rough stone embankment. It turned him from a very poor man into a very rich one. *Awu vu* are white, and are found in streams. The name was revealed in a dream as being the correct one, and no meaning is known.

A group of stones known to all Eastern Rengmas lies just outside the Eastern Angami village of Phakekedzum. It is believed to be the petrified trunk, arm and leg of one Khorpu of Sahunyu who was killed long ago by raiders from Swemi. The spear wounds on the trunk are still pointed out. No one touches it, for to do so would bring on a violent storm. In this section of the tribe there are few but clan and private stones, which are washed and fed when the house in which

<sup>1</sup> The Lakhers also own "rice stones," which they call *salong*. See Parry, *The Lakhers*, p. 57.

they are kept is rebuilt and at the annual *Ngazu* ceremony which marks the close of one year and the beginning of the next<sup>1</sup> At that ceremony offerings of fowl or fish, boiled rice and rice-beer are made to them before the feast begins

A man who finds a stone of the right shape and texture—roundish and smooth—can be certain it is a true luck-stone, and a very powerful one, if it is lying in a nest it has made for itself He can also be quite certain it is genuine if he finds it in a little patch of unburnt jungle on a burnt hillside, for it has shown its potency by keeping the fire away from its home If neither of these tests can be applied and he is not sure, he takes it home and waits to see what dreams come to him From them he can be certain one way or the other If it is a genuine luck-stone he must offer it rice-beer and a portion of a small pig killed in its honour If this is not done the stone will run away and disappear From his stones a man can tell what his fortune will be Their breeding will bring great prosperity If they appear shrivelled there will be scarcity in the house If there are scratches on them like tooth-marks the owner will suffer some injury Some stones are found to be so powerful that they only bring evil dreams and misfortune to their owner These are given to the “morung,” where their power, being more widely distributed, will be for good

### *Witchcraft and Charms*

The Eastern Rengmas seem to be happily free from black magic, but the fear of it is very real in the Western section of the tribe So terrible is it that men would only tell me about it in absolute privacy, and even then their voices dropped to a whisper The secret is believed to be known to certain women who hand it down in the female line The means used is a poison, some of the ingredients of which are magical and some really poisonous They are said to be firstly some of the pubic hairs<sup>2</sup> of the poisoner singed in the fire, secondly some earth from an anthill, thirdly a rare

<sup>1</sup> See p 176

<sup>2</sup> Tribes of the Gulf of Davao in the Philippines use a secret poison compounded of human hair and certain roots See *Savage-Landor, Gems of the East*, Vol II, p 207

herb with a red root, and fourthly a rare fungus so deadly that anyone handling it must wash thoroughly before he touches food. All these are pounded up together and a small quantity is kept concealed in a bamboo tube. To bring about the death of a person, a minute quantity is put into his drink. If he is lucky he has violent purging and gets rid of it. If he is unlucky his body swells up and he dies slowly. On the day when the body is buried the poisoner bathes her body and observes one day's "genna" in her house. One man who failed to purge the poison out is said to have cured himself by boiling a puppy and swallowing the eyes whole! There is one known way of testing a suspected drink. The person to whom it is offered holds it in one hand and with the other unobtrusively scrapes off a little of the dirt and dried sweat he is sure to find on the back of his neck. He drops this into the drink as he sits and talks, and if it is poisoned it will effervesce. It is said that an interpreter of the Deputy Commissioner's Office named Kugwasung of Tseminyu tested in this way a drink offered him by Loshenyu of Phesinyu, whom he suspected of being a poisoner. The drink foamed, and he forced her two sons to drink it on the spot in spite of the frenzied protests of their mother. They both died within ten days. This was about twenty-five years ago. To have and use a knowledge of this mysterious poison is said to bring wealth, and this must be why the ghoulish practice continues—for I find it hard to think there is not some truth in the current belief. Persons suspected of the vice are practically immune from punishment, for everyone is too terrified of them to molest them. There is a woman called Simu in Tseminyu to whom four deaths are ascribed, but she cannot be brought to book. Another woman in Tesophenyu, a thin, evil-faced creature with a vile tongue, has an even worse reputation.<sup>1</sup> Yet when in 1932 the village, in desperation, talked of punishing her, she cowed them all by threatening them with the fate of Thongsunyu. I was there a few hours later, and never saw a more frightened lot of people, for Thongsunyu, a village between Sentenyu and Tsokonkonyu, was wiped out by two

<sup>1</sup> With no evidence whatsoever no court can do anything to her

witches They buried in the village path some red and black thread and some chopped thatch from a house, and all who stepped over it sickened and died Long ago though it happened, this story is even now told in horrified whispers

A man's death can be caused by making some rice-beer, naming it as his, and including it among the offerings to the dead at the *Ngada* ceremony <sup>1</sup>

Another foul piece of magic is sometimes done by a childless woman who is jealous of a couple much in love She will watch for one of them to go and ease himself or herself, and creep up later and retrieve the little stick all Nagas use for toilet purposes on such an occasion This she burns, and puts a little of the ash in the rice-beer of the other of the pair This is believed to cause violent quarrels between husband and wife A person who has drunk ash of this description can have it extracted from his head by a medicine-man <sup>2</sup> Because of their dire effect when wrongly administered, *gumu* leaves can be brought under the heading of witchcraft Their efficacy must be due to faith <sup>1</sup> They are a most potent love-charm, of which very few know the secret The only reputed purveyor I know is Sanranyu, an old woman of Phesnyu To obtain these leaves one who knows the secret puts nettles and a python's tooth into a pot <sup>3</sup> This she covers with a stone and buries in the jungle When it is dug up again after the appointed time it will be full of *gumu* leaves, which resemble (and probably are!) garlic leaves Tiny scraps are sold to love-sick men and maidens at prices highly satisfactory to the seller She has to be told for whom the leaf is wanted—a tasty bit of news for an old woman—and can make it entirely ineffective if she wishes by pricking it with a pig's bristle This not infrequently happens, and the seller, when upbraided, explains that she only sold such a valuable thing with great reluctance The buyer must take the bit of leaf home in a hollow bamboo and must be very careful not to answer a call of nature when it is in his hands, or it will loose its potency He can administer it in various ways He can either lay it gently on the head of his beloved when she is

<sup>1</sup> See p 173

<sup>2</sup> See p 171.

<sup>3</sup> See p 224



not looking, or he can hand it her with something, or he can put it under the leaves which line her food dish. But should she by any chance eat it, her stomach will become crammed with leaves and she will die. Another potent love-charm which is not without its risk is the feather of a bird called *zuchongnyu gitsung*, which I have not identified, but which is said to be found in the foothills. These birds are believed to fight all day and sleep with their heads together at night. This charm therefore causes the most violent passion, relieved by equally violent quarrels. The Eastern Rengmas have a simple and effective love-charm in a leaf called *azu*. All you have to do is to discover the leaf in the jungle, hold it between your finger and thumb and utter the name of your beloved, and all will be well. But you must seek it fasting and in silence, and must wash your hands on your return.

The Western Rengmas believe in the existence of a wonderful love-charm obtained from a thin, brown snake that lives on rocky ground. This snake is said to be poisonous, and to be so fierce during the mating season that it will chase anyone who comes near. To obtain the charm a man must take his courage in both hands, find two snakes in the act of copulation, and cut off their heads. These heads are hidden in a pot, and in some secret way the charm is made from them. No one of good family ever uses it, as it is liable to cause the user's clan to die out. The Western Angamis have the same story of the fierce snakes, but say the heads should be hidden in a crevice in a tree. There they rot, and weeds grow from their remains and are used as charms.

If a Western Rengma suffers from chronic ill-health he gets one of the three oldest men in the village to brush him at the village spring with a bunch of seven different plants. In Tseminyu the plants are (1) a twig of *baubinia* (*pogwu*), because it is so beautiful, (2) a blade of thatching grass (*ihu*), because it is useful to men, (3) a blade of spear grass (*nyhe*), because its sharp edge will make him keen and lively, (4) a *figus* twig (*ndre*), because it grows so big, (5) a shoot of wild raspberry (*sapane*) for reasons unknown, (6) a twig of an irritant tree (*pūshong*), that evil may beware of touching him,

and (7) a *bapho* leaf, for unknown reasons. The patient is brushed ten times, with the prayer "Whether this evil came from your younger sister, your elder sister, your father-in-law or your mother-in-law, may it depart from you now and may you be well." The patient then bathes.

The three sections of the Rengma tribe have entirely different charms to prevent pigs straying. The Tsemnyu group get some of the root of a small purple-and-white flower that blooms in June and is called *tebwa gewungye* ("pig charm"). This is put under the pig's trough, if it is actually mixed with the food, the pig will die. In the Tesophenyu group it is believed that a pig can be prevented from straying by catching the smallest chicken of a brood, washing it in water and giving the water to the pig to drink.<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Rengmas cure a wandering pig by pulling out some of its whiskers, burning them, mixing them with ashes, and putting them in its food.

### *Dreams*

All Rengmas believe that dreams are unreliable when winter is merging into summer, or summer into winter. Of these two periods autumn is the worse, for at that time the rice from the last harvest has not all been eaten and the new rice is coming into the ear, this, in a way that is only vaguely stated, is believed to create confusion. Probably the underlying idea is that at that time it is impossible to know whether a dream of plenty or scarcity refers to the old rice or that as yet unreaped. If more than one dream is seen at night, the first is the truest. The Western Rengmas are emphatic that orphans' dreams are truest, but the Eastern Rengmas merely say that some individuals are habitually granted truer dreams than most people.

Dreams are interpreted by a symbolism which is usually obvious. The following are examples of beliefs common to all sections of the Rengma tribe. To drink rice-beer in a dream means that rain will fall. A man who dreams of red cane or hair, or anything the colour of blood will suffer

<sup>1</sup> Probably the idea is that as the feeble little chicken cannot stray far, the pig that drinks the water will also stay at home.

bodily injury<sup>1</sup> If a man is chased and bitten by a dog in a dream he will be mauled by a leopard or tiger Water in dreams symbolises crops To dream, therefore, of a dry village spring or a dry pond means that famine is coming, while a dream of a big river, a gushing spring or a full pond foretells a bumper crop If the river seen in a dream is muddy, weeds will be troublesome on the "jhumms" The bear is such a hairy animal that if a man dreams of one he knows that weeds will be so thick on his land that he will have difficulty in getting a crop Visions of leopards and tigers also mean weeds, but not in such overwhelming quantities A specially lucky animal to see in a dream is the langur monkey, for its long tail hanging down from the bough symbolises the fine heads of rice bending the stalks over It is unlucky to dream of throwing a spear at game and missing it, for the dreamer will fail to gain something he wants On the other hand, it is lucky to see killed, or to kill, any game in a dream, especially elephant and wild boar, which are mighty eaters But a dream of seeing meat cut up means premature death A dream of falling to the ground foretells illness, but recovery is certain if the dreamer picks himself up or is helped up by a friend Rengmas do not seem to have the nightmare in which one falls from an infinite height and wakes up before one reaches the bottom They do, however, have dreams of flying through the air, and these the Western and Eastern Rengmas interpret entirely differently The former say that they forbode shortage of food, probably because the dreamer's feeling of lightness symbolises light supplies The latter, on the other hand, say they mean good health for the dreamer, who will feel light and vigorous when he awakes, they say these dreams are actually caused by a hair which has fallen from the dreamer's head being blown along by the wind All Rengmas agree that to dream of having sexual connection with a woman is an omen of good health, but the Western Rengmas add that to attempt to begin in waking life an intrigue with a woman loved in a dream is useless, and will only lead to

<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Rengmas say that if a man dreams of wearing red cane leggings he will be wounded in war

quarrels and trouble For a man to dream that his organ is erect means that he will be strong and will defeat his enemies, to wake in the morning in that state means success in the coming day, and a Rengma litigant is particularly pleased and confident if he is blessed in this way on the morning of the day on which his case comes up for hearing in court For a man to dream, however, that he merely sees a woman's parts is a certain sign that he is in grave danger of being cut with some edged weapon, and a man who has such a dream will not handle a "dao" or axe all next day For a woman to dream of her own parts is not unlucky, and if in her vision she sees a blow-fly enter them as if to lay an egg inside she will assuredly be blessed with many children and great wealth The ordinary symbol of children is a gourd or pumpkin, both of which contain hundreds of seeds<sup>1</sup> If a man or woman picks, or is given, a good one in a dream, a large and healthy family will be the result, but if the gourd or pumpkin seen is twisted or crooked, there will be cripples among them, and if it is rotten, there will be no children at all A man also knows that he will have children and wealth if he is given a spear or "dao" in a dream, for they are appropriate to him A dream of fire means hot sun and fine weather The Eastern Rengmas apply this interpretation to all dreams of fire, but the Western Rengmas are inclined to restrict it to a vision of a house or village burning, and to regard a dream of a fire on the hearth as an omen of good or bad luck in the house, according to whether it burns up or dies down To dream of climbing a cliff or a tree means success in general, but a man who dreams of a human corpse or a woman carrying a child knows that game is symbolised, and that he will not come home empty-handed next time he goes out hunting By an analogy which the writer has not been able to fathom, all Rengmas believe that whoever dreams of a domestic pig will only do half a day's work next day, and will be driven in from the field by bad weather or illness or something People who have a dream of a pig actually go off

<sup>1</sup> The old English belief is that to see a pumpkin in a dream is very unlucky See Lucas, *Vegetable Cookery*, p 350

to their work next day grumbling at how little they are going to get through, and probably always find some reason for knocking off at midday. A man who dreams of people who have died believes that their spirits have really visited him. The Eastern Rengmas draw no conclusion from these dreams, but the Western Rengmas are alarmed if the dead come and talk to the living too much, and believe that leading men of the village will be drawn away after them and die. Similarly, mithan and cattle appearing in dreams are believed to be spirits in that form. Consequently all depends on their behaviour, and if a man is charged by a mithan or cow in a dream he will certainly be ill. The Eastern Rengmas believe that Europeans seen in dreams are really spirits, and probably evil ones at that,<sup>1</sup> the Western Rengmas are doubtful on this point, and in Tesophenyu there is a very strongly held local belief that if anyone dreams of a European going round the village and looking at everything there will be a bumper crop. The Western Rengmas say that a quarrel is foretold by a dream of a swarm of bees or a snake, but the Eastern say a dream of catching a fowl is the most certain omen of this. All Nagas agree that one of the most disastrous dreams is that of a tooth falling out, but the two sections of Rengmas interpret it in very different ways. The Eastern Rengmas say that the dreamer will be poor, and the Western Rengmas that the dream foretells with certainty the death of the child of a woman the dreamer calls "sister," i.e. a woman of his clan and generation. The most terrible thing of all to dream of is a gibbon. This ape is believed never to drink from birth to death, and since water symbolises rice, and hence wealth in general, anyone who dreams of the waterless gibbon will be desperately poor for the rest of his life. So much is this dream dreaded that the animal is never mentioned after sundown lest being reminded of it should cause someone to dream of it, an interesting indication that the Rengma realises that dreams are not only messages from another sphere, but are consequent upon waking thoughts.

<sup>1</sup> The Lakhers agree with them (Parry, *Lakhers*, p. 480)

*Natural Phenomena*

The phenomena of Nature appear so inevitable to the Naga that he speculates little on them, but he will accept no explanations which do not square with the evidence of his senses. That is why, though he is prepared to accept in good faith most things he learns in schools or hears from boys who have had some education, he is most reluctant to believe that the world is a globe and revolves round the sun. He says the earth is quite obviously flat and the sun quite definitely moves across the sky. One very intelligent man put it to me in these words: "The teachers in the Mission School say the earth is moving fast round the sun. Why then, if you throw a stone straight up into the air, does it fall straight down again and not behind you or in front of you or to one side of you? You must have moved while the stone was in the air. If you throw something into the air when you are travelling on a lorry on the Manipur Road it falls far behind you." Let the reader think of an answer to that conundrum simple enough for a Naga to understand!

Like all Nagas the Rengmas believe that the sun (*yhekha*, A, *am*, B, *aren*, C) and moon (*asu*, A, *asha*, B, *asa*, C) come from below the earth when they rise and sink below it when they set, lighting the Land of the Dead alternately with this world. There are believed to be six skies above the one we see<sup>1</sup> and six earths below the one on which we live. There is a vague belief that the sun is probably male and the moon female, but there is no definite opinion on the subject. They hold the ordinary Naga belief that the moon was once as hot as, or hotter than, the sun,<sup>2</sup> but the Western and Eastern Rengmas give totally different accounts of how the sun became the hotter.<sup>3</sup> The Western Rengmas

<sup>1</sup> For a similar Polynesian belief see Elliot Smith quoting Tylor, *Diffusion of Culture*, pp. 159-161.

<sup>2</sup> See *Sema Nagas*, p. 250, *Lhota Nagas*, p. 172, *Ao Nagas*, p. 301 and note, Parry, *Lakhers*, p. 492.

<sup>3</sup> The wide differences in beliefs regarding natural phenomena between the Western and the Eastern Rengmas are most noticeable. In these beliefs, because they are unimportant to their holders and therefore fluid, a separation of, at most, 500 years has caused great divergence. Social beliefs and customs, on the other hand, differ comparatively little, because they matter and are firmly held.

say that God (*Songnyu*) saw that if the orbs were of equal brilliance men would never be able to tell night from day, and so would be unable to regulate their lives. He accordingly planted a *figus* tree on the moon, which has shaded its light ever since.<sup>1</sup> The Eastern Rengmas say that the sun and moon once fought, and the former dimmed the latter by smearing ashes on its face.<sup>2</sup> Stars (*shenyu*, A, *awachi*, B, *awachi*, C) are sometimes thought to be the souls of dead persons who for some unknown reason have gone to the sky instead of to the Land of the Dead.<sup>3</sup> The Western Rengmas have separate names for the two branches of the Milky Way. The larger is called *Zule* (Diyung River) and the smaller *Serizu* (Tulo River) or *Papvu Ayeng* (Diyung image). *Zule* and *Serizu* were men of old. *Serizu* killed a sambhur and boasted over-much, at which *Zule* was angry and parted from him. The Eastern Rengmas call the Milky Way *Anza 'Wikhu* (Spirits "morung"), and say the spirits meet in it to talk.<sup>4</sup> There are believed to be seven Pleiades, but the ordinary man can see only six.<sup>5</sup> Anyone who can see seven will live very happily with his wife. They are called *Shenyü pembr kepenyu* ("star pounding-table carriers," A), *Amur asām kepuwa* ("in-law" pounding-table carriers, B) or *Horechu* (C), and are believed to be souls carrying a large pounding-table. Of the Belt of Orion the belt is called *Terrhasonkeyenyu* ("the sentries") (A) and the dagger *Byenyu* ("the strangers") (A), the Tesophenyu group calling the whole *Wachi asukuwa* ("ambush stars"). The Eastern Rengmas call the belt *Arrhi* ("enemies"), the top star of the dagger *Apo kesowa* ("first attacker") and the others *Asi kekewa* ("followers").<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Parry, *Lakhers*, p. 493, for the identical belief held by Lushais and other tribes.

<sup>2</sup> Similar beliefs are widely held. See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 172, and Parry, *Lakhers*, p. 493.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Aos the magician Champichanglangba became a star after his death (*Ao Nagas*, pp. 327, 328).

<sup>4</sup> See Parry, *Lakhers*, p. 495, note 2, for tribes which regard the Milky Way either as a river or as a meeting-place of souls. There are examples as far apart as the Fiji Islands and South America.

<sup>5</sup> The Lakhers recognise only six, but some tribes say there are seven. See Parry, *Lakhers*, p. 495, note 1.

<sup>6</sup> The Sema belief is very similar (*Sema Nagas*, p. 251).

The constellation is believed to represent the sentries of a village waiting to kill some travellers who are going up to it in single file. Venus is called *Shepfu* (A), *Wachr ketsurwa* (B), *Ngaratsu* (C), both as a morning and an evening star, and is believed to influence the crops. Castor and Pollux are *Letung* (A), *Wachr ala puzya* (B), *Aochr* (C). They are a girl and her lover who ran away together. The Western Rengmas say he is cutting a stick for her. Shooting-stars are merely called "falling stars" (*shenyi keche*, A, *awachr keshenchowa*, B, *awachr kopruwa*, C). When there is an eclipse of the sun it is believed that some very great man has died somewhere. The moon is eclipsed when a tiger eats it.<sup>1</sup> A rainbow (*zengokesu*, A, *chamakhokesho*, B, *arepi*, C) is believed to rise from wet places and to be spirits' breath. No one may ever point at it.<sup>2</sup> The Western Rengmas say that if you do you will be ill, and the Eastern Rengmas that a child will be born to you with two fingers growing together, though this calamity can be averted by biting a whetstone at once. The Tseminyu group also call a halo round the sun *zengokesu*, but in the other groups it is called *am khowu* ("sun circle," B), or *amuthe kecha* ("round circle," C). It is believed to occur when great men die.<sup>3</sup> The Western and Eastern Rengmas hold entirely different beliefs regarding thunder (*tsungkesong*, A, *atsa'ang keshuwa*, B, *atsu keshu*, "rain throwing," C). The former say that it is the voice of God, and believe that from whatever direction it is heard the crops will be good. The latter believe that rain is caused by spirits in the sky pouring water from wooden vats. The thunder is the noise of the vats being dragged into position on the roof of heaven before their contents are spilled out. All sections of the tribe have a special word (*sangchumu*, A, *isa'amo*, B, *ashemu*, C), for a bad thunderstorm accompanied by black clouds. Such storms are believed to presage the death of great men. No explanation is offered for hail (*tegweng*, A, *ayr*, B, *arve*, C).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ao Nagas*, p. 300, and note 1, for other examples of this belief. The Lakher say it is a dog that eats the moon (Parry, *Lakher*, p. 492).

<sup>2</sup> For other tribes holding this belief see Parry, *Lakher*, p. 499, and note 2.

<sup>3</sup> The Lakher belief is similar (Parry, *Lakher*, p. 488).



The snow-covered Himalayas are clearly visible from the Western Rengma country, but no one seems to have wondered much about them. In the Tseminyu group there is no word for them. The Tesophenyu group call them *Ays*<sup>1</sup> *kesha* ("dead earth"). All Rengmas believe that lightning (*tsungkhukhupyu*, A, *atsa'angpyü*, B, *achure*, C) strikes down when a sky spirit hurls a thunderbolt (*tsamphara düding*, A, *atsampha 'mphu*, B, *anıza 'mvo*, C) down to fell a tree which he needs.<sup>2</sup> A house is sometimes struck by lightning because the builder has unwittingly made one of his posts from a tree which a spirit intended to take. The "sky axes" or "spirit axes" are small polished stone celts, which are found in considerable numbers in the Naga Hills.<sup>3</sup> All tribes believe that it is they that split trees struck by lightning, and that it is under such trees that they are most frequently found. The Eastern Rengmas will not touch them, but if a Western Rengma finds one he takes it home and keeps it as a luck-stone, for which purpose they are considered most potent. The Western and Eastern Rengma explanations of earthquakes (*tsungkenr*, A, *amukhu kekezu*, "everything shaking," B, *amukhru kezah*, C) differ entirely. The Western Rengmas say that they occur when the sky, which is male, has connection with his wife, the earth.<sup>4</sup> At such a time much illness is believed to be caused, and all the evil spirits are frightened and rush about so madly that people have to shout to drive them away. In some villages the people scatter ashes over their houses and granaries as a disinfectant against these panic-stricken spirits. The Eastern Rengmas, on the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> *Ays* = "hail" has the last syllable on a high note and *ayn* = "earth" on a low note.

<sup>2</sup> The Western Rengmas simultaneously hold an entirely irreconcilable belief that lightning is the flashing of the "daos" of two brothers, Kenshu and Halashu, who fight in the sky.

<sup>3</sup> See *Angami Nagas*, App VII. The Santals also believe that prehistoric celts are thunderbolts (Bodding, "Stone Implements in the Santal Parganas," *J A S B*, LXX 1). They are also connected with thunder in China (Bishop, "The Neolithic Age in Northern China," *Antiquity*, Vol VIII, No 28, p 396). Parry, curiously enough, reports that he has never found any in the Lushai Hills (*The Lakhers*, p 57), though they are common in all other hill districts in Assam.

<sup>4</sup> The *Lakhers* have the same belief (Parry, *Lakhers*, p 486). So have the people of Purul in Manipur State (note by Colonel Shakespear).

say that the earth is held steady by a being (apparently nameless) who sits with his hands clasped one above the other round his knees. Sometimes he dozes and his hands slip, and then there is an earthquake. Earthquakes can be both good and bad. Those are good which cause new springs of water to gush out, and those are bad which cause springs to go dry.<sup>1</sup> If an earthquake goes on too long it is almost sure to dry up springs and do damage. Therefore when one is in progress all call out, "Stop, stop." The Tseminyu group observe the next day as "genna," the Tesophenyu group any convenient day in the next four or five, and the Eastern Rengmas none at all.

<sup>1</sup> It is to be remembered that, unlike the Western Rengmas, the Eastern grow all their rice on irrigated terraces, for which an unfailing supply of water is essential.

## PART V

### FOLK TALES AND SONGS

#### *Folk Tales*

OF recent years a change has come over the Naga tribes, and the children grow up ignorant of the old tales. To hear them one must go to the old and middle-aged, and the day is coming when the only record of them will be in books such as this.

A very ancient *corpus* of stories, common to Angamis, Semas, Lhotas and Rengmas, concerns a rascal who was always playing pranks on his neighbours. The Angamis call him Mache, the Semas Iki, and the Lhotas Apfuho. Of the Western Rengmas, the Southern group call him Che, and the Northern group Iki, as the Semas do. To the Eastern Rengmas he is known as Ichu.

#### *Che and his Grandfather*

There was once a man called Che who lived so long ago that no one knows what his village was. He used to herd his grandfather's cattle, but instead of looking after them properly he killed and ate them one by one in the jungle, tying up the bones in bundles and hanging them up in a herdsman's shelter. When he noticed that fewer and fewer cattle were brought back to the village at night Che's grandfather became suspicious, and kept asking the reason. But Che always put him off with evasive answers, saying, "Some cows are just going to calve," or "Some cows have just calved," or "Some cows have calves in the jungle which are coming on splendidly." But the day came when Che's grandfather insisted on going down to the

jungle himself to see his cattle. When he got to the herdsman's shelter he saw the bones hanging up, and knew the truth. Then he chased Che and tried to kill him, but Che fled and hid in a field of thatching grass. The grandfather systematically began cutting all the thatching grass with his "dao," knowing he would find Che's hiding-place sooner or later, but when he got near to Che a crow-pheasant called from a far corner of the field, and the old man, thinking it was Che's voice, went to look. This gave Che the chance he wanted, and he slipped away and continued his flight.

*How Che was Pard for a Charm*

During his flight Che caught a fly, and put it under his foreskin and tied the skin over it so that it could not escape. At the first village he came to he asked the people if they wanted to buy a wonderful charm. They said they would probably buy it if they could see it first, but Che said he would only sell it if they agreed to buy it before they had seen it. After some argument they agreed to this. So Che undid the end of his foreskin and the fly flew away. Then he shouted, "The charm has escaped. You must pay me a big pig as compensation." This, however, they refused to do, and Che wrangled with them till evening. After nightfall Che tied torches to the trees on the path leading up to the village and lighted them. Then he tackled the villagers again and said, "Look, many men from my own village are coming to force you to pay the pig due to me." So, being frightened, they agreed to pay the pig in the morning, and Che said he would send his friends back. So he went down and put the torches out.<sup>1</sup> In the morning the pig was handed over and Che carried it off chanting "*Ho khundronyumi, ho khundronyumi*" ("Ho, something for nothing"). Hearing this, the villagers went after him and asked him what he meant by chanting that he

<sup>1</sup> For the episode of the lighted torches see *Lhota Nagas* p. 177.

had got something for nothing. He replied that it was the custom of his village to chant these words whatever load they were carrying.<sup>1</sup>

When he had gone some way and was crossing a bridge, a tiger met him and seized him by the leg. Then Che said, "Grandfather tiger, do not seize my leg. Seize one of the bridge legs (supports)." The tiger foolishly did so and Che escaped, but he had to drop the pig and the tiger got it.

### *How Che Operated on the Children*

In time Che came to a village where the people had no holes in their fundamentals. Instead of easing themselves they used to vomit up the food they could not absorb. One day Che climbed a tree and sat on a branch and eased himself in public. The villagers thereupon asked him if he would operate on the children so that they, too, would be able to perform this very convenient act. He said he could easily do so, and all the parents gave him a great feast before he began. Then he got ready a very big rice-bin and a red-hot iron. As each child was brought to him he bored a hole in its fundament with the red-hot iron and dropped the poor thing into the rice-bin. When all had been operated on he put the lid on the bin and got ready to leave, telling the parents that they must on no account look inside till he was over the top of a distant ridge. The parents did as he told them, but when they looked inside the basket all the children were dead. The infuriated fathers set out after Che with their "daos," but he had a long start. At last he was tired with running and climbed a tree and hid in the branches. The trackers came to the foot of the tree, but there the track disappeared and they were at fault. One man in his rage kept shouting, "If only Che were here," and slashed and slashed at the tree he was in till it was nearly down. Che was so frightened that he passed urine

<sup>1</sup> See *Sema Nagas*, p. 321.

involuntarily Then the villagers said, "It's raining, it's raining," and held their "daos" over their heads to keep them dry and went home

Both the Northern group of Western and the Eastern Rengmas have a slightly different version The former relate how Iki was chased when the basket was opened Hard pressed, he smeared his face and body with clay and came back to meet his pursuers They asked him if he had seen Iki, but he said he had not, and passed on They went on following the tracks, however, and soon found that the man smeared with clay to whom they had spoken was Iki So they pressed on harder and caught him How they tried to kill him is another story In the Eastern Rengma version Ichu smears his face with clay and escapes in the same way When he is again hard pressed he climbs a tree, as he does in the Tsemnyu version To do so he had to cut steps in the trunk, but the tree was an *azimu* tree and the sap turned dark at once So the pursuers thought the steps were old and sat under the tree discussing what to do next Ichu up in the branches mischievously passed urine on them, and they went off home holding their "daos" over their heads and saying it was raining

#### *Che and his Friend*

Che came to a village and settled there, and became friends with a man named Halasu Now, Halasu had a big pig which Che very much wanted to eat He wondered how he could get hold of it, and one day he said to Halasu, "You ought to do the *Senda* ceremony with that pig of yours" Now, there is no such thing as the *Senda* ceremony, Che simply made up the name So Halasu naturally asked Che the proper ritual Che told him to kill the pig and fill a large wooden dish with the pork and put it outside his house at night with a rat-trap near it He assured him that if he did this he would find in the morning that he had caught a pig even bigger than the one he had killed Halasu was foolish enough to believe him, and of course Che went at night and ate all the pork in the dish.

Halasu guessed in the morning, when he found the pork gone and no pig caught, that a trick had been played on him, and determined to have his revenge. So he told Che he ought to do the *Senda* ceremony too. Che agreed at once, but instead of killing his pig, he only pinched it inside the house so that people would think he was killing it, and instead of really singeing it he only lighted a big fire of old thatch outside his door. Instead of filling the dish with pork, he cut up great gobbets of giant taro that irritate the throat violently if eaten, and put them in the dish. He left it outside with a trap near it, and Halasu came at night to eat the pork and pay Che back in his own coin. But after a few mouthfuls his throat began to hurt so much that he cried out in his pain. And Che sat in his house listening and laughing, and said, "My trap has caught something all right."

#### *Che Hunts with the Tiger*

Che had not forgotten how the tiger had seized his leg and was determined to have his revenge. One day he went hunting with the tiger. The bag was a good one, and Che made two conical baskets to carry up the meat. His own basket he made in the ordinary way, but when making the tiger's basket he split the bamboo for the ribs without severing the stem from the root. Che therefore carried his share of the meat up to the village, but the tiger could not move his basket and was left behind in the jungle.

#### *Che Fishes with the Tiger*

One day Che and the tiger agreed to go fishing together. But Che made the tiger agree that whoever got the most fish should kill the other. To make sure the tiger should not get most, he gave him a hollow bamboo with no node at the bottom to put his fish in. But early on the tiger caught a big fish which jammed and did not fall through when he put it into the hollow bamboo, and he piled the small fish he got onto it till his catch

was much bigger than Che's. Che was therefore very frightened, and thought he would be killed by the tiger according to the agreement. So, to think things over, he strolled along the bank and began to pick and eat the berries of a *dekhukhong* tree. The tiger called out and asked him why he was picking the berries, and Che answered, "This is the tree my ancestors used to kill people with." At this the tiger was so frightened that he ran away, and Che went home with both their shares of fish.

#### *Che and the Widow*

One day an old widow asked Che to pollard a tree on her "jhum" that was too big for her to climb. He agreed to do so if she would give him a pig and plenty of rice-beer. So the widow killed and cooked a pig and prepared rice-beer. But she only brought half the pork down to the field. Che noticed this at once, but he ate what she had brought and climbed the tree and began cutting the branches. After a little the strokes of his "dao" got feebler and feebler, and he said he would not have strength to go on unless the widow brought down the rest of the pork and some more rice-beer. So the widow went back to the village and got the rest, but when he had eaten it Che refused to do any more work and went home.

#### *The Villagers Try to Kill Che*

The custom is that every day when people go down to their fields in the morning they leave ready cooked the midday meal of the children whom they cannot take with them. Now, Che lived by his wits, and never did any work if he could help it. He used to spend every day idling at home in the village, and lived on the children's food, which he secured by a trick. What he used to do was to collect the children every day and get them to dance on the village dancing-ground. Then while they were busy dancing he would sneak off and steal the meals left ready for them in their houses. Every evening the children used to



complain to their parents that they were hungry because their midday meal had disappeared. The parents could not make out how this had happened, but they felt sure Che must be at the bottom of the trouble, and determined to kill him. It was therefore arranged that on the day when the "jhumms" were to be fired he should be made to climb and pollard a big tree right out in the middle, where he could be encircled with fire and burnt to death. Che somehow discovered the plot, but he kept his knowledge to himself. He climbed the tree willingly enough, and when he saw people watching him he chopped away at the branches readily enough. But when no one was looking he kept slipping down and digging near the roots of the tree, climbing up again and going on with his work when anyone came near. At last a deep pit was ready and when the fire came he got into it and pulled a flat stone over the top and saved himself from the flames. When the fire had passed over he got out again and, smearing himself with charcoal and the yellow slime found at iron springs, lay down and feigned death at a point where two paths met in the field. He put a dead rat under his head, and every day the passing villagers, finding the stench worse and worse, thought Che was dead and decaying. And the people used to laugh when they saw him, and say, "Che is done for at last." But every day he used to slip away into the village to steal food when all the villagers had passed him on their way to their work, and get back to his position again before they returned in the evening. The children still complained that their midday meals were disappearing, and said that Che was alive and in the village every day. At first no one would believe this, but later they left a man in the village to keep watch, and he saw Che. Then the villagers had to admit they had been outwitted.

The Tesophenyu, or Northern, group of Western Rengmas also tell this story of the unsuccessful attempt to burn

Iki to death, but make it an act of revenge for killing all the children whose fundaments he bored. They add the detail that when he was pollarding the tree he sang "*Ase bolo, he, he Anung bolo, he, he,*" words of which the meaning is unknown, and also say that he led water by a channel into the pit which he dug for himself. The end of the story follows the Lhota version<sup>1</sup> very closely. They say that when Iki climbed out of the pit he found a barking-deer which had been burnt to death. He cut out its stomach and covered himself with the intestines when he lay by the path. The people who passed said, "Iki is done for," and an old woman coming last even jabbed him in the face with her stick. That evening Iki reappeared in the village and distributed the barking-deer meat to everyone except the old woman, to whom he gave only a bit of bone.

### *Che's Revenge*

Later the villagers made another attempt to get rid of Che. They caught him and left him swinging from the end of a creeper over a deep pool. He could not climb up, and if he let go he would fall in and be drowned. Che swung and waited, and soon he saw an eloping couple from another village passing by with all their best beads and ornaments on. He called out to them and said, "You ought to come and swing on this creeper for a little. The air is wonderfully pleasant. If you will hook me in to the bank with a long stick I will let you take my place." So they hooked him in and, leaving all their beads and ornaments on the bank, they swung out on the creeper. But Che climbed up and cut the creeper, and they fell into the water and were drowned.

Then Che picked up the beads and ornaments and went back to the village, and said to everyone that he had been under the water, and had found the most wonderful ornaments at the bottom, showing them the eloping couple's property to prove the truth of his words. All the villagers wanted to go and collect things too,

<sup>1</sup> See *J.A.S.B.*, XXII, p. 298

and went down with him to the pool. As each man peered into the water Che held up the ornaments in his hands so that they were reflected in the water and seemed to be lying on the bottom. Some people plunged in voluntarily and were drowned for their greed, and if anyone hesitated Che pushed him in, till all the men and women of the village were dead. Then he went back to the village, and when the children asked him where their parents were he said, "They are busy under the water looking for beads for you" <sup>1</sup>

The Eastern Rengmas tell the same story in a rather different form. Their version runs as follows —

Ichu had a fine pair of ivory armlets, and his fellow villagers asked him where he got them. He said that if they really wanted armlets like this he would take them to the place next day, but every man must carry with him a big earthenware jar. Next day he took them down to a deep pool in the river and made every man fasten his jar on his back. Then he said, "There are plenty of fine armlets at the bottom of the pool. You ought to go in and get them." Then one man went in, and the jar on his back filled with water and he never came up again. And Ichu said, "He is so long coming back he must have found a lot of armlets. Hurry up and go in and join him." Then all the men plunged into the water and were drowned, and Ichu went home alone. And when the women asked him where their husbands were he said, "They are cutting up tusks to make into armlets. They will come home with songs of joy."

The Tesophenyu group have a story in which Iki plays a very minor part.

#### *Iki's Mithan Sacrifice*

Iki got so rich by cheating people that he was able to perform the mithan sacrifice in the series of Feasts of Merit. When his mithan was being led round the

<sup>1</sup> For the Lhota version see *J. A. S. B.*, XXII, pp. 295, 296.

village, a woman who was weaving went on with her work and took no notice. People told her to get out of the way of the procession, but all she said was, "Who is Iki to sacrifice a mithan?" But when the mithan came to where she was it lashed out at her and kicked her on the genital organs and wrenched them out. Her organs fell onto the ground and the leopard cat and the civet, who were out for a walk together, found them and decided to eat them. The civet cat said he would go back home and fetch some fire to cook the meat with, but when he came back the leopard cat had eaten it all and was nowhere to be found. At last the civet cat found him sitting picking his teeth on the top of a bundle of thatching-grass that had been left leaning against a tree. And the civet pulled him down and cursed him and said, "May you never have a warm home." That is why leopard cats always live in cold, damp, shady places.

### *Iki and the Pork*

One day Iki was cooking pork and a boy came along and cried because it smelt so good and he wanted some. So he asked Iki where he got the pork, of which he always seemed to have such a good supply, and Iki said, "I just put my hand up a mithan's vent and pull out all the meat I want from inside." So the boy went and put his hand up a mithan's vent as Iki said he had done, and the mithan bolted and dragged the boy along till he was held up in an *alashu* bush and his arm was wrenched out of the mithan.

The Eastern Rengma version of this is rather different and runs as follows:—

Ichu's brother asked him how he always managed to get pork to eat. Ichu told him he could get it quite easily if he would do as he always did. All he had to do was to put on an ivory armlet and push his arm right up a buffalo's vent and pull out what meat he wanted

The brother did as Ichu had suggested, but the armlet stuck inside the vent and he could not get his arm out. The buffalo ran away and dragged him into an *aykha* bush. There his arm came out, and the brother blessed the bush. That is why to this day *aykha* bushes are so firmly rooted that no one can pull them up.

The Eastern Rengmas have another, and very obscene, story in which Ichu's pork supplies figure.

### *Ichu's Lust*

Ichu put out all the fires in the village except his own. The women came and asked him for fire, but he said he would only give it to them if they let him have connection with them. At first they refused, but later one woman agreed to his terms and was given fire. Then all the women agreed, and he had connection with all the women in the village.

Another day a mother and her boy came to Ichu's house, and the woman said, "Where do you get so much pork? My little boy is always crying for pork." Afterwards Ichu spoke to the boy alone and said to him, "If your mother will let me have connection with her I will give you a leg of pork." So the boy went to his mother and begged her to agree, so that he might get the pork. He persuaded her to come to Ichu's house, and she said she would submit to him if her son was allowed to watch and look after her. Ichu talked to her, and said he would only give her pork if she completely satisfied him. The boy stood by and watched and encouraged his mother, and she helped Ichu as much as she could, but when it was all over Ichu refused to hand over the leg of pork on the ground that he had not been completely satisfied.

The above story is obscene enough, even to English ears, but for a Naga it touches the depths of obscenity, since a son stood by and watched his mother performing the sexual act, a thing which it is absolutely tabu for him to see.

*Iku and his Friend's Wife*

Iku had a rather dull-witted friend who had a prettier wife than he had. Iku wanted to get her, and thought of the following plan. He arranged with his friend that each should give his wife a sound beating. Ichu did not really beat his wife, but he made her cry out while he rained blows on the wall of his house. His friend, however, really beat his wife. Then Ichu turned his own wife out and took his friend's, she being willing enough to leave her husband because of the beating she had had.

The Eastern Rengma version is different and runs as follows.—

Ichu and his brother had a dispute as to which had the prettier wife. The brother's wife was really the prettier, and Ichu was jealous of her. Their houses were next door to one another, and one morning, before they went down to fish, they each told their wives to have the house well swept and to be waiting with their bodies washed and their hair oiled so that the dispute could be finally settled in the evening. While they were out fishing Ichu said to his brother, "When we get back you will hear a blow inside my house, and you will know I am killing my wife. Then you must kill your wife too." But in the evening Ichu only hit the wall of his house, so that his brother should hear, while his brother really killed his wife. When the woman was killed she was stirring rice to make rice-beer. And the cut severed some of the hair of her head and it fell into the rice. That is why to this day hairs are often found in rice-beer.

Only the Tesophenyu group seem to have any story of Ichu's final end. They say he was killed by spirits, and that his "dao"-holder was turned into stone and lies near the Lhota village of Lungsachung.

As one of the above folk-tales suggests, the Eastern Rengmas take a greater delight in obscene stories than do

the Western They tell the following tales of a sex-hero named Zosheto

### *Zosheto's Fishing*

One day Zosheto took all the women of his "khel" down to fish <sup>1</sup> He said he would go upstream and put in the poison, and they were to take off their skirts and stand naked in the water downstream, holding their skirts so as to make a barrier to stop the fish getting down. They did as he told them, but instead of fish poison he used a root called *ayrha* with an irritating sap The sap was carried down with the water, and entering the women's sexual organs made them so mad with desire that they begged Zosheto to satisfy them He agreed, and so wonderful were his powers that he was able to satisfy all but one girl, and she was only left untouched because she said she must ask her father's leave to have connection with Zosheto So great was her desire that she started for the village at once to get the necessary permission But Zosheto went up by another way and, arriving at her house first and finding her father out, he hid in the inner room She came into the outer room and called out and said, "Zosheto has had connection with all the other women of our 'khel.' May he have connection with me too?" Then Zosheto answered from the inner room in a feigned voice and said, "Zosheto has had connection with all the other women, so you must let him have connection with you too" Then she went straight down to the river again But again Zosheto went quickly by another path and was ready waiting for her He asked her what her father had said, and when she told him the words he had himself uttered, he satisfied her too.

### *Zosheto's Child*

Zosheto had a sexual organ so long that he was able to wind it round his waist. He had a secret

<sup>1</sup> It is not the custom nowadays for women to assist at fish poisoning

intrigue with a woman, but there was no need for him to enter her house to love her. Instead he made a hole in the wall opposite her bed and standing outside the house he used to have connection with her through it. At last she bore a son. No one knew who his father was. One day she brought the baby boy to where Zosheto was sitting talking with the men of the village. They said it would crawl to whoever had begotten it. So she put it on the ground and it crawled to Zosheto and he brought it up.

All Nagas are fond of animal stories. In many of their stories the tiger is the chief character.<sup>1</sup> The Rengmas make that miniature copy of the leopard, the leopard cat, his servant.

### *The Hungry Tiger*

The leopard cat used to be the tiger's servant. Once upon a time the tiger had not been able to kill for several days, and was very hungry. So he thought of a plan to get a meal. He said to the leopard cat, "I will pretend to be dead. You are to go and summon all animals to see my body, and while they are gathered round me weeping I will jump up and catch one." So the leopard cat did as he was told and called all the animals, but he let them into the secret. They obeyed the summons, and all collected round the tiger lying on the ground and wept, saying, "Our father is dead. Our chief is dead." But in the middle the leopard cat went up to the tiger and looked at his genital organ, and, with the words, "This is not the organ of a corpse," gave it a hard pull. The tiger jumped up with a roar, and all the animals fled, some uphill and some downhill. The tiger asked the leopard cat which way they had gone, but all he would say was, "Some uphill and some downhill." Then the tiger was very angry with his servant for the trick he had played on him.

<sup>1</sup> It is curious that the elephant never figures in Rengma folk tales and very rarely in those of other tribes.



The above is the Tseminyu version. In the Tesophenyu version the leopard cat is loyal to the tiger, and it is the civet cat who becomes suspicious and pulls the tiger's genital organ.

### *The Invention of Fire*

One day the tiger told the leopard cat to go down with him to the river to fish. When they were ready to start the leopard cat said, "Grandfather tiger, we have no rice, no beer, no chillies, no salt and no fire. What are we going to do for a meal?" And the tiger answered, "That does not matter. Everything will be all right." So off they went, and when they got to the river the tiger lay in the water downstream with his mouth open, and the leopard cat drove the fish into it. In this way they made a great catch. And when it was time to eat, the tiger put a bamboo fire-thong under one of his hind claws and pulled it backwards and forwards till fire was made. It was from this that men learnt how to make fire. Then he scratched his head, and salt came out, hit his fore leg, and beer came out, hit his hind leg, and rice came out, and hit his knee, and chillies came out. So they had a splendid feast.

Now, the leopard cat also had a servant, the squirrel. And one day he thought he would be as clever as the tiger had been, and took the squirrel down to fish, carrying nothing with him but a spear-butt. And the squirrel said, "Grandfather leopard cat, we have no rice, no beer, no chillies, no salt, and no fire. What are we going to do for a meal?" And the leopard cat said, "That does not matter. Everything will be all right." When they got to the stream they began to fish, and the leopard cat lay in the water downstream with his mouth open, while the squirrel drove the fish. But he was much too small to block the stream, and was swept away by the current and nearly drowned. All they caught was one tiny fish. When it was time to cook it and eat it, the leopard cat struck the spear-

butt on a stone to make fire,<sup>1</sup> but all he got was a large splinter in his eye. Then he scratched his head to get salt, but he only hurt his scalp. And when he hit himself to get other things required for a meal, he only raised large bruises. So he and the squirrel had to go back hungry, and the squirrel was so angry that he left his service.

### *The Tiger and the Wild Boar*

One day the tiger and the wild boar decided to fight and see which was the stronger of the two. It was agreed that they should meet in seven days, and for those days the tiger busied himself tying bands of cane round his body to protect himself, while the wild boar wallowed and let layer after layer of mud dry on. When they fought at the end of the seven days the tiger got nothing but mouthfuls of mud every time he charged and tried to bite the boar, but the wild boar was able to snap a band of cane every time he charged. At last the tiger was badly wounded and admitted defeat. He knew he would never be able to kill a wild boar in its prime, so he said, "Just wait till you are old. Then I will eat you." This is why tigers never attack wild boars in their prime, but always try to kill them when they are old.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Tiger and the Cow*

In the old days, when all the different kinds of animals could talk to one another, the tiger and the cow were friends. The cow used to make a great deal of noise when she munched grass, and the tiger said to her one day, "Why do you make such a noise when you munch

<sup>1</sup> He used the alternative method of making fire with a flint and steel. In the Tesophenyu version of this tale the tiger too makes fire by this method.

<sup>2</sup> The Lhotas have the same story. See *Lhota Nagas*, pp 175-176. The only actual fight between a tiger and a wild boar of which I have ever heard was reported in the weekly edition of *The Statesman*, dated July 19th, 1934. It occurred near Dera Ismail Khan. It was watched by several people, so engrossed were the animals. The boar was killed after a battle lasting sixteen hours, at the end of which time the tiger could hardly move.

grass? You must have wonderful teeth" "No, indeed I have not," said the cow "Look, half my mouth has no teeth in it at all" When the tiger looked into the cow's mouth he saw that this was true, and knew that he could easily kill her That is why tigers eat cows to this day

### *The Tiger and the Monkey*

One day a pregnant woman coming up from the fields found her way barred by a tiger As a ransom for her life she promised him the child which was in her womb The tiger agreed to this, and in due time a daughter was born and was called Ahī Then the tiger began to pester the mother, and ask her when she would hand over her child And always the woman made excuses, such as, "She is too small She can only lie on the bed and kick her legs" But at last Ahī reached girlhood, and her mother knew she could keep her no longer So she arranged with the tiger to wait for her in a field of thatching-grass, and sent her daughter to pick some flowers that were growing there There the tiger caught her and took her to his house He engaged a monkey as a servant to look after the girl The monkey was very cruel and cunning He used to pinch the girl and make her cry, and neighbours, wishing to comfort her, used to bring presents of food, which the monkey ate And the tiger, to please and soothe her, used to kill women and take their ornaments to give her

At last the monkey asked Ahī's mother what she would give him if he restored her daughter to her, and the mother said she would give him whatever he wanted So the monkey, when the tiger was away one day, hid the girl in the jungle and lighted a big fire in front of the tiger's house The tiger, seeing the smoke, hurried home, and the monkey said to him, "There is not a moment to lose Ahī is in the fire You must go in and get her out." So the tiger plunged into the flames and was killed, but the monkey stayed outside.

Then he took Ahı from her hiding-place and gave her back to her mother. And as a reward the woman gave the monkey a skein of red thread and tied it onto his buttocks. That is why monkeys have red buttocks.

The following story is told to explain the belief held by certain Naga tribes that tigers <sup>1</sup> and men are in some way akin.

*The Spirit, the Tiger and the Man*

The mother of the first spirit, the first tiger and the first man came out of the earth by a pangolin's hole <sup>2</sup>. It is not known who the father was, but the son was of the Tepinyu clan. That is why members of this clan may not eat pangolin meat, though members of other clans do. A Tepinyu man, too, may kill a tiger, but he must never admit he has done so or perform the ordinary ceremonies in celebration of the feat. If a tiger eats a Tepinyu man it gets dysentery and dies.

Of the three children of the woman, the spirit was the oldest, the tiger the next, and the man the youngest. In time the woman fell ill, and her children looked after her. When the tiger stayed at home with her instead of going to the fields, she was always worse in the evening, but when the man or the spirit stayed with her she was better. But she got slowly worse, and at last she knew her end was near, and said to the man and the spirit, "Let the tiger go down to the fields to-day, for if he stays alone with me he will eat me. You two must stay with me, for I am going to die." And that day she died, and the man and the spirit buried her body under the hearth so that the tiger should not find and eat it, and when he came back from the fields they were cooking a meal on the grave.

After their mother's death the three sons continued to sleep together in her house. The man had his bed on one side of the hearth, the tiger on the other, and the spirit across the house behind the fire. Now, the

<sup>1</sup> Tigers and leopards are hardly distinguished. A common term is used for both the great cats.

<sup>2</sup> The Lakhers also believe that the first man came out of a hole in the earth. See Parry, *The Lakhers*, p. 231.

spirit was suspicious of the tiger, and fixed a long reed so that it stuck out at right angles from his bed and stretched between the tiger's bed and the man's. And in the middle of the night he felt the tiger press against the reed, but it fell with a rattle on the hearth and the tiger slipped back into bed. But from this the spirit was sure that the tiger intended to eat the man, and he decided that the family must split up.

Then the spirit arranged a contest between the tiger and the man. He set up a banana stem at a distance, and said that the one who touched it first should have a straight path in life, and the loser would always have to wander hither and thither. He cut tracks for the two competitors to run in, and to help the man he cut for him a straight track through the jungle, and for the tiger a winding one. Even so the tiger ran so much faster than the man that he would have touched the plantain first and won if the spirit had not created a bow and arrow and put them into the hand of the man. With the bow the man shot an arrow into the banana tree, and so touched it first and won.

Now, the tiger was very angry at the trick that had been played on him, and wanted to go straight off into the jungle. But the spirit and the man said to him, "We are brothers. We cannot part without saying farewell." But the tiger said, "From henceforth we are of one race no longer. You man, see you do not wander too much in the valleys in the winter, when the leaves are off the light jungle and I take shelter in the shady gullies. And in the summer do not come too much up to the high, breezy ridges, for I walk there then. When you pluck shoots from stumps in the 'jhum's' to stop them growing always pull away from the stump<sup>1</sup>. Always use a hoe for weeding. Never marry women of your own clan."<sup>2</sup> Then he departed.

<sup>1</sup> No reason is given for this very obvious piece of advice.

<sup>2</sup> It is believed that a man who commits incest by marrying a woman of his own clan is liable to be eaten by a tiger.

One day the man was watching his fields when the tiger came up and talked to him. And he said to the tiger, "What are you most afraid of?" to which the tiger replied, "I fear a cowherd's trumpet more than anything." The man was sitting and weaving some coarse bamboo matting for a house wall while he watched his fields. The tiger carelessly let his tail lie across the matting, and the man wove it in. Then the man blew a blast on a trumpet, and the tiger bolted off in a panic, dragging the matting through the crops and laying them flat. And the man shouted to the tiger that if he did not repair the damage he would chase him all over the country with a trumpet. So the tiger earthed up all the fallen plants with worm-casts. After that he went back into the jungle, and to this day the man and the tiger have never held converse together again.<sup>1</sup>

Many other creatures besides the tiger figure in Rengma folk-tales

*The Wagtail and his Tail*

At the beginning of time the world was nothing but a sheet of water. God sent various birds and beasts to search for dry land, but none was to be found. At last He asked the crab to help. The crab dived to the bottom of the universal sea and brought up earth in its claws. This God spread over the surface of the water, and sheets of soft mud appeared. Animals and birds were sent to try and stamp this firm and dry, but none succeeded till the wagtail arrived. He patted the earth with his tail till it became firm and dry, and that is why his tail keeps going up and down to this day.<sup>2</sup>

*Why the Crab is Small*

Once a wild boar went to bathe in a stream. While he was in the water, the crab, which was much bigger

<sup>1</sup> For other versions of this tale see *Angami Nagas*, pp. 261, 362, and note, *Sema Nagas*, pp. 317, 318.

<sup>2</sup> For other versions of a universal flood see *Lo Nagas*, p. 31 note, *Sema Nagas*, p. 380 note.

then, pinched his private parts The wild boar jumped up in pain and charged straight into the jungle There he ran into a wild banana tree and frightened a bat which was hanging under one of the broad leaves The bat flew into a sambhur's face and stampeded it The sambhur trod on a tiger cub in his flight and killed it At this the tiger was very angry with the sambhur, but the sambhur laid the blame on the bat So the tiger spoke to the bat, who laid the blame on the wild boar So the tiger spoke to the wild boar, who laid the blame on the crab The tiger wanted to catch the crab and punish it, but the crab had withdrawn into its hole in the rocks, and the tiger could not get it out The tiger called all the animals, but none of them could get at the crab At last the gibbon put his hand right into the hole and pulled out the crab But the crab hung on to the gibbon's finger with his claw Then the gibbon shook the crab off, and the crab fell to the ground and broke into many small pieces, each of which became a crab. That is why crabs are small nowadays <sup>1</sup>

### *The Ant and the Green Pigeon*

In the days when all creatures could talk, the ant and the green pigeon traded together The ant bought one of the green pigeon's chicks for a grain of rice But when the pigeon cracked the grain he found it had no kernel So he asked the ant to return his chick, but the ant had already eaten it That is why the green pigeon is always mourning for its young.<sup>2</sup>

### *Why Dogs cannot Talk*

At the beginning of time men never died, and all living creatures and plants could talk and understand each other Men went on increasing till food became very scarce Things were worse because whenever a

<sup>1</sup> For other versions see the story of the muna and the dove on p 567 of Parry's *Lakhers* and note on p 569

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to the sad note of the green pigeon For the Lhota version see *J A S B*, XXII, pp 316, 317

man trapped an animal it protested and he let it go, and whenever a man went to cut anything in the jungle the plant asked for mercy and the man went home again. God saw that the world would soon be full and there would be nothing to eat, so He took away the power of speech from all living things except dogs and men.

Then men began to hunt persistently. Their dogs, being able to speak, were able to call out exactly the line taken by the game they were chasing and the hunters were able to cut it off and kill it. Soon there was grave danger of all animals being exterminated. So God sent Hasung, and he stretched the dogs' tongues. And from that day dogs cannot speak.

#### *The Dove and his Legs*

One evening God told the dove that if he came in the morning He would paint his legs a beautiful red. The green magpie happened to overhear what was said, and got up very early and, coming to God first, asked Him to paint his legs. So God painted his legs a brilliant red. When the dove came a little later there was only old colour left. That is why the red of a dove's legs is dull.

#### *The Pied Cuckoo*

Long, long ago a man called Khasu went down to the fields with his father and slept the night with him in the field-house. In the middle of the night the father thought he would test his son's courage, so he crept out of the house and then rushed up to the door with a shout. The son, not recognizing his father in the dark, quickly picked up his spear and wounded him mortally. As the father lay dying he said, "I do not blame you, my son. You only acted as a man should. Without me you will not know the proper time to sow. So every year I will come back and tell you. Then he died and turned into the pied cuckoo, which is called *Khasu kapfu*—"Khasu's father." And every



spring this bird comes and calls "*Khasu kapfu*" when it is time to sow <sup>1</sup>

### *The Weasel and the Night Cuckoo*

The night cuckoo always utters its call at night. One day the weasel said to it, "My friend, how wonderful it is that you should sing at night!" The cuckoo replied, "I know nothing about it I call out in my sleep" That is why nowadays a weasel waits till it hears a cuckoo calling at night, and then creeps up and kills it

### *The Banana Tree and the Sago Palm*

The banana tree and the sago palm were friends In those days the sago palm bore fruit from the crown, and the banana tree from the stem The sago palm said to the banana tree one day, "It is better to bear fruit from the crown as I do" After this the banana tree always bore fruit from the crown, and the sago palm from the stem The banana tree dies when it has fruited once, but the sago palm can fruit year after year

### *Why the Sunbird is Small*

At the beginning of time there was a great darkness (*tsang kuzang*),<sup>2</sup> and all birds and animals had a meeting to see if a division into night and day could not be arranged The screech owl said, *Che me zong, che me be* ("One year day, one year night"), but no one liked this idea And the sunbird said *Beri beri, beri beri Thensu khängshäng* ("Alternately, alternately Three hearth-stones") Man overheard this, and that is why he always uses three stones for his hearth And all the animals and birds were very pleased at this idea, and they stroked the sunbird so hard that he became very

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to this bird's very distinctive note For the Sema version see *Sema Nagas*, p. 62

<sup>2</sup> See *Thadou Kukis*, p. 24 and note

small Then dawn appeared and the great darkness  
was over <sup>1</sup>

There is another version of the division of time into day  
and night

*The Separation of the Dead*

At the beginning of time day and night were the same,  
and the dead lived in the same world as the living and  
worked at the same time But since the dead and the  
living were in different villages, their "gennas," when  
they abstained from work in the fields, fell on different  
days Often when the living were observing a "genna" <sup>1</sup>  
day the dead used to go to their deserted fields and pick  
things, and so break the "genna," and the living did  
the same thing to the dead This led to so many  
quarrels that God divided time into day and night,  
and gave the day to the living in which to work, and  
the night to the dead And He moved the dead to  
another world, too, for when the dead and the living  
lived in the same world they were so numerous that  
there was danger of there not being enough land to  
"jhum"

There are few stories of the first finding of the staple  
things of life

*The Finding of Rice* <sup>2</sup>

When the wagtail made the world firm he left one  
pond. Rice grew in the middle of it, and man sent  
the rat to swim out and bring it to him As a reward  
he said that rats could always have their share, and  
that is why they infest granaries

The above is the Tsemnyu version The Tesophenyu  
version is fuller and runs as follows —

<sup>1</sup> Most Naga and Kuki tribes preface this myth with one of a time when  
the sun was so hot that it threatened to destroy all living things The  
ancient Britons held an identical belief of a summer so hot that the woods  
were set alight by the sun, and men and animals perished See Sir John  
Daniel, *Philosophy of Ancient Britain*, p. 57

<sup>2</sup> The imprint of husks of cultivated rice (*Oryza Sativa*) has been found  
on pottery of the Yang Shao period in Kausu, of a date of about 2000 B.C.  
See Anderson, *Children of the Yellow Earth*, pp. 335, 336

At first men had no rice, and used to eat the seeds of a grass called *amathang* <sup>1</sup> One year a man named Tekhi of the Zamwaza clan of Tesophenyu village "jhumed" a piece of level ground. One day he was tired and went to sleep in his field, and when he woke up he found huge cracks had appeared and a pond had been formed, which is to be seen on Tesophenyu land to this day. In the middle of the pond a plant of real rice grew up and ripened. But no one could get it, because no one knew how to swim. So the rat was asked if he would get it, and was promised a share of food for ever if he would do so. Then the rat swam out and gnawed off the stalk and brought the ear. Tekhi sowed the seed in his garden, and at harvest ate some of the grain. He found it very good, and since then all men have eaten rice <sup>2</sup>

#### *The Finding of Chillies*

It was in Tekhi's garden, too, that chillies first grew, though no one had ever sown the seed. Tekhi was not sure if they were poisonous or not, so he gave one to a dumb slave to see what would happen. The slave's face showed how good it was, and since then men have eaten chillies.

The Tsemnyu version is slightly different. They say that chillies were always known, but were only used as ear ornaments till a man gave one to his dumb slave to see if it was poisonous. The slave caught his breath at its hotness, but it was so stimulating that he managed to say that it hurt. After that the man tried one, and the habit of eating them became universal. The Eastern Rengma tradition is entirely different, and runs as follows —

There was once a man named Khalu who never went to the fields or did any work at all. When he was left

<sup>1</sup> There is evidence that the seeds of the grass *setaria lutescens* were used as food by "jhumming" tribes in Northern China in Neolithic times. C. W. Bishop, "The Neolithic Age in Northern China" *Antiquity*, Vol. VII, No. 28, p. 395.

<sup>2</sup> For other versions of the story that the rat first brought rice to man, see  *Ao Nagas*, p. 312 and note, *Thadou Kukas*, p. 29.

alone in the village, property used to disappear. He was accused of theft so often that he became wearied, and asked the villagers to kill him. They did so, and a rush of fumes went up from his stomach to the sky. In his stomach there were chillie seeds and from these seeds chillies have spread all over the world.

### *The Finding of Cotton*

In the old days Rengmas used occasionally to pound a creeper called *khuruhunyu pungsong* (A), or *khaphwahl* (B) and make rough garments, but ordinarily men and women went naked. It was Amthang of Tesophenyu, the site of whose house is still shown, who first introduced cotton. He was a trader, and got some cotton seed from the plains and sowed it and taught men how to use it. At first cotton grew in the pods in the form of thread, so that there was no need to spin it. But a woman who had an intrigue with a man wanted to make a specially fine cloth for her lover, and undid all the natural threads in her cotton and re-spun it. After that cotton pods carried no more thread and everyone had to spin.

The Eastern Rengmas agree that at first both sexes were entirely without clothes of any kind. An orphan, however, got some simul cotton and learnt to spin and weave with that. They have no tradition of where real cotton first came from.

The Aos and Lhotas have stories of fighting rocks,<sup>1</sup> but I have found only one among the Rengmas.

### *Japvu's Raid*

Japvu mountain, to the south of the Rengma country, went to war with Wokha hill to the north. He raided across the Rengma country and took Wokha hill's head. Khūpfu, a cliff on Phiro land, joined to cut off Japvu's retreat. But he killed them both, and the clefts where he cut them can be seen to this day. Then Pangzung, a rock on Sema land to the east, joined battle with

<sup>1</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 117. *Ao Nagas*, pp. 216-218.

Japvu, and their shouts could be heard all through the night. In the morning men went to look, and found that Pangzung's head had been taken. A last effort to stop Japvu was made by Tsokungkwe, a rock on Tseminyu land, but Japvu severed Tsokungkwe's spine with one stroke of his "dao" and went on his way home.

The only Rengma tale I know of a race other than their own is the following. It is clear from it that the Rengmas used to trade with the Kacharis when they had their capital at Dimapur in the sixteenth century,

### *The Kachari King*

Once upon a time there lived at Khongtuhadanyu ("bead bazaar"), which plainsmen call Dimapur, a King called Nzongteghibu ("Rengma iron man"). This King seized the wife of a great man and kept her. The husband therefore came to the King and said, "I give you the choice of three ways in which to prove yourself. You must either pull a thin bamboo, or climb a thorny tree, or fight a tiger single handed." Then the King consulted the woman, and she said, "If you pull a thin bamboo it will split and your hands will be cut to ribbons. If you climb a thorny tree the flesh will be torn from your body. You must choose to fight the tiger." So the King said he would fight the tiger. And the husband enclosed the arena with a sevenfold fence of bamboo matting. When the time came, the King and the tiger faced each other in the arena. The King had his "dao" in his right hand, and in his left a ball of strips of raw hide, which his wife had cunningly given him. Six times the tiger charged, and at each charge the King pushed the ball of raw hide towards its open mouth and slashed at its body with his "dao". At the seventh charge he pushed the ball of hide right down its throat till it choked, and killed it with one stroke of his "dao". Then the King cleared the fence with one bound and

stood before the husband, who said "You are a brave man You have won my wife" So the King kept the woman, but afterwards her relations laid a curse on him, and his tongue rotted in his mouth and he died

There remains a number of miscellaneous stories.

### *The Magic Rice*

Once upon a time a man was so poor that he had no rice at all None of the rich men in the village would give him any on loan, so he could not even sow any All he could do was to plant taro and sow Job's-tears and gourds Nevertheless, he kept urging his father to come and help him to build a granary for rice The father told him not to be foolish, but the poor man would not stop pestering him, so he built a granary Till harvest there was nothing to eat and drink but taro and water Yet he always said, "We shall get rich" And behold, when the gourds ripened he split them open one by one, and every one was full of rice So the granary was used after all

### *The Confusing of Tongues*

When the tribes were on their migrations, they built a stone tower on a spur above where Khonoma stands now God asked them why they were making it, and they said they wished to climb up into the sky In order to prevent this God made them speak different languages, so that they could not work together <sup>1</sup>

### *The Origin of the Tselanyu Clan* <sup>2</sup>

The ancestress of the Tselanyu clan had a lover to whom she bore a son called Tsela, the first man of the clan Though she did not know it, her lover was a

<sup>1</sup> This widely spread myth extends even to the New World The ancient Mexicans believed that a giant named Xelhua built a great pyramid to the sky and thereby angered the thunder god, and that Votan, his grandson, gave men their different languages at this pyramid See Lewis Spence, *The Magic and Mysteries of Mexico*, pp 120 and 219

<sup>2</sup> See p 11

hairy caterpillar by day and a man by night. One day she met a hairy caterpillar on a bridge and jabbed at it with a stick. When her lover came to her that night his neck was all twisted, and when she asked him the reason, he told her he was always a hairy caterpillar by day, and that it was at him that she had jabbed with her stick. When she heard the truth she was very angry, and pushed him off the bed into the fire. With his dying breath he cursed her and said, "May you die at the touch of my hair." That is why the hairs of these caterpillars are so poisonous. From that day the woman's food was always full of caterpillar hairs, and she died of starvation.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Lizard Spirit*

Once upon a time a man watching his fields at night up in his little tree-house heard the sound of a band of evil spirits approaching. When they got to the foot of the tree the spirits stopped and argued. None of them wanted to be the one to climb up, and each tried to urge another on. At last they all said with one voice, "Khasong is the bravest. He must climb the trees." So Khasong climbed the tree in the form of a human being. The man threw his spear at him, and Khasong fell to the ground dead. Then the other spirits picked up the body and buried it amid wails of "Alas for Khasong! Alas for Khasong!" In the morning the man came down and examined the ground. All he could find was a tiny grave, and the body in it was that of a lizard.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Orphan Girl*

Once upon a time a man and his wife lived with their own daughter and an orphan girl whom they had adopted as a daughter. One day a man came from another

<sup>1</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, pp 195, 196

<sup>2</sup> A curiously exact parallel is recorded from Ceylon, where it is believed that whenever a Bodrimar, a kind of Banshee, is fired at a dead lizard will be picked up on the spot. Spittel, *Far Off Things*, p 198, quoting Nevill's *Taprobanean*.

village to ask for the hand of the daughter in marriage. The parents agreed and told him to come back at dawn next day and take her. Now, the adopted daughter was very harshly treated by her foster-parents, and especially by her foster-mother. She had begun pounding rice long before the man came, and when he arrived at dawn she was all dirty and covered with husks, while the real daughter only sat idly in the house wearing her best clothes. Then the mother said to the suitor, "Which will you take, this clean girl here or the dirty girl?" And the suitor said, "I will take the dirty girl, for I can tell that she works hard." The woman could not protest, for she had given the suitor his choice. But she was very angry, and gave the orphan girl her daughter's oldest clothes to wear and oldest basket to carry to go to her husband's house. Now, the orphan girl had secretly made herself fine clothes of wild simul cotton, and a new basket, and had bought herself some bracelets with what little she could save. And all these treasures she had hidden in a hollow tree. So she took her husband to the tree and changed there, and the couple went off very happy, greeting neighbours as they passed them on the road.

In time the couple grew very rich, and the girl sent for her foster-parents to visit them. When she got to the village the foster-mother asked where her adopted daughter's house was, and the neighbours said, "That fine house with a carved post over there." When they arrived at the house the girl welcomed them in and spread a cloth embroidered with cowries on the woman's stool and a fine cloth earned by a mithan sacrifice on the man's stool. The man felt ashamed at the way they had treated the girl in the past, and would not sit down at first, but the woman plumped herself down truculently at once. The girl offered them rice-beer instead of water to wash their hands and mouths. The man refused this, but the woman accepted it. The evening before they left the girl gave her foster-father nothing but meat to eat with his rice and her



foster-mother nothing but bones, but in the morning she gave the man nothing but bones for the return journey and the woman nothing but pieces of meat. Now, her husband kept wild dogs for hunting, and she told them to see the couple on their way. But first she warned her foster-father. And the dogs chased the couple. The man kept throwing down bones for them to eat, and they delayed so long gnawing them that he was able to reach home. But the woman threw down lumps of meat, and the wild dogs gobbled them up so quickly that they caught her and ate her before she could escape.

That night the dogs came home when the girl and her husband were inside the house, and the dogs talked together and one said, "I have got some of my grandmother's pubic hair between my teeth." From this the girl knew that the dogs had eaten her foster-mother, and she drove them away from the house. Her husband was angry at this and said, "I will give you nothing to eat till you get my dogs back." So she tied a cloth tightly round her waist to stay the pangs of hunger and called the dogs for seven days. But they would not come, so she undid the cloth round her waist and fell down dead of hunger.

A number of stories exist which are designed to explain the origin of songs. The language of songs is almost impossible to translate. Grammatical sentences hardly exist in them. Rather words are strung together, each of which calls up some picture in the mind of the hearers. There is no scansion and no fixed number of syllables in a line. Old songs often survive when all else has gone. For example, the villages of Tsokonkonyu and Choshinyu have adopted Angami dress and many Angami customs, but still sing Rengma songs.

#### *Pyembvi's Daughter*

Ghukhtih, daughter of Pyembvi the great hero,<sup>1</sup> first married Veni of Sentenyu. After his death she re-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 7.

turned to her parents at Tsoginyu From there she was abducted by Ndatsu of Phesinyu with the help of Satung and Akhempfu She was a very beautiful girl, and Ndatsu desired her, but she would not allow him to sleep with her, and would not even answer when he spoke At the end of three months Ndatsu thought he would test the girl So he got his friends to carry him up from the fields and lay him on the floor of his house as if he were dead drunk Then Ghukhuli in silence lifted him up and put him on his bed, and killed a fowl and fed him with it Ndatsu believed then that she was becoming more friendly, and they began to sleep together

One day when they were in the field together he sent her up to a stream near by to get water, and followed her to see what she would do And Ghukhuli stood by the water and sang this song of loneliness

<i>Zuchongkhi</i>	<i>apfu</i>	<i>Pyembvi</i>
On the outer range	my father	Pyembvi

<i>Zuhkhi</i>	<i>apfu</i>	<i>Vem</i> <sup>1</sup>
On the inner range	my father	Vem

<i>Tsungeng</i>	<i>shepfu</i>	<i>shenyu</i>	<i>lino</i>
Sky	Venus	star	that

<i>Apfu</i>	<i>shenda</i>
My father	longing for

<i>Avyu</i>	<i>shenda</i>
My mother	longing for

<i>Changeng</i>	<i>shepfu</i>	<i>shenyu</i>	<i>lino</i> <sup>2</sup>
Sky	Venus	star	that

Her husband did not let her see him, and went quietly back to his work When she returned he asked her to sing the song she had sung at the stream But she was angry and would not, and abused her husband

<sup>1</sup> Vem was really her first husband, but in poetical language he can be spoken of as her father

<sup>2</sup> The meaning of the song is that her own people seemed as far away from her as the sky and the stars

When Pyembvi heard what had happened he in turn made this song.

<i>Satung</i>	<i>periku</i>			
Satung	the snake			
<i>Akhempfu</i>	<i>menyhakolo</i>			
Akhempfu	of the itching mouth			
<i>Ne</i>	<i>dtesho</i>	<i>anyu</i>	<i>lopenyu</i>	
You	why	my child	selling	
<i>Zuhki</i>	<i>chokhung</i>	<i>ching</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>hiteyo?</i>
On the inner range	cold rice	lump	one	buy to eat?
<i>Akhu</i>	<i>kepyen nyalo</i>			
My darling	do not abuse			
<i>Akhu</i>	<i>genso nyalo</i>			
My darling	do not be angry with			
<i>Akhu</i>	<i>kepyen penyu</i>			
My darling	if you abuse			
<i>Khashempung</i>	<i>kha</i>	<i>shitle</i>		
Khashem tree	by	will bury (you)		
<i>Akhu</i>	<i>kepyenpenyu</i>			
My darling	if you abuse			
<i>Verapung</i>	<i>kha</i>	<i>shimo</i>		
Vera tree	by	will bury you		<sup>1</sup>

### *The Bird Woman*

Once upon a time girls from the sky used to come and bathe in a certain village spring. They had wings and tails like birds, and used to take them off when they bathed. They came so early in the morning that no one saw them, but people always noticed that the water in the spring was muddy when they came to draw. One day a man determined to find out why this was, and watched very early at the spring. The sky maidens came and bathed as usual, and he was able to seize

<sup>1</sup> In this song Pyembvi upbraids the two men who helped Ndatsti to abduct his daughter and warns Ndatsti that he will kill him if he illtreats her. Both songs in this story are in the Tsemnyu dialect.

the wings and tail of one Without these she could not get back to the sky, and she became his wife and bore him a son and a daughter After a time the mother noticed that though the children were very naughty and always cried when they were with her, they were very good and quiet when they were alone with their father One day she asked the children why they never cried when they were with their father, and they told her it was because he always let them play with her wings and tail She asked them where they were hidden, and they said "In a hollow bamboo in the rafters" So she climbed up and got them and put them on, and said to her children, "My children, I am going to fly back to the sky now For you, my daughter, I will let down thread from a ball, and for you, my son, I will let down the cord of a top And then I will pull you both up after me" Then she flew up to the sky, and pulled the children up after her as she had said

And the husband was very sad, and wept day after day He searched everywhere for his wife, but he could not find her, and he sent presents to the sky-world, but nothing would make her return At last, when he had nothing more to send, he said to the crow, "I will give you anything you desire if you will get my wife back" Now, in those days the crow was white So he said to the man, "You must give me as much Job's-tears as can be piled on seven mats, and you must fill a wooden dish with powdered charcoal and water and paint me black" When the man had done as the crow asked him, it said, "I will fly a little way and caw, and fly a little way and caw, and you must keep on following me At last I shall perch on a house in a bamboo grove You must then enter the house, and you will find your wife and children there" It all turned out as the crow had said, and the man found his wife and children But the house was in the land of the spirits that feed on human flesh<sup>1</sup> The woman therefore warned him not to wander about too much.

<sup>1</sup> See p 167

But he did not obey her, and one day when he was out he met a female fiend. When he came home and told his wife this, she hid him in the house with seven brass vessels under him and seven brass dishes over him <sup>1</sup>. But it was all in vain. The female fiend came to the house and said, "I smell man in your house," and threw off the seven vessels which covered him. Then she seized him and, cutting his head open with a weaving-sword, sucked all the blood from his body and threw the corpse down by the hearth.

The sky-woman remained in the sky. No one knows what happened to the boy, but she sent her daughter back to earth, and the girl taught men this song.

<i>Avyu</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>kennyu</i>	
My mother	me	bore	
<i>Tsungyeri</i>		<i>tetsung</i>	
To the Tsungyeri stream		she used to go	
<i>Tsungteli</i>	<i>masa</i>		
Burrowing	deceived		
<i>Asungunyu</i>	<i>toghugü</i>	<i>no</i>	
Plainsmen's	crow	lo	
<i>Tsuno</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>lote</i>	
He	to me	sent a message	
<i>Teghi</i>	<i>khong</i>	<i>tsanu</i>	<i>no</i>
Iron	dishes	seven	lo
<i>Thu</i>	<i>sandru</i>	<i>ashenbu</i>	<i>rangr</i>
Making	bringing	my son	(I) hid
<i>Zozo</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>kejunya tserillo</i>	
With words	me	do not make sad	
<i>Chinsen</i>	<i>khingdronyi</i>	<i>khongche</i>	<i>toghu</i> <sup>2</sup>
Jungle	flowers	like	crow

Ordinarily songs do not have stories attached to them. Here are two from Tseminyu.

<sup>1</sup> The Rengmas have no brass vessels. Probably the idea was that the smell of the metal would keep the evil spirit away.

<sup>2</sup> This song is probably very old. The third and last lines seem to be meaningless, and may be corrupt.

*Lament of a Girl Married to a Man of Another Village*

*Mhupe*                      *rheni*                      *nukheshe*                      *le ho*  
Sent away                      another village                      given                      girl, alas

*Tsule*                      *pfuchuhugi*  
She                      has many relations

*Ale ho*                      *nyengkoha lugi*                      *le ho*  
I                      alas                      a lonely flower                      girl, alas

*Amhu*                                      *rheninyu*  
I am sent away                      to belong to another village

*Loptsu*                      *adukebeng*                      *tsong*                      *shsalo*  
Field work                      pleasing to me                      path                      if allowed,

*Adubeng matale*  
I should have been happy

*Loptsu*                      *adukebeng*                      *tsong*                      *shmoho*  
Field work                      pleasing to me                      path                      would not allow

*Loptsu*                      *nsing*                      *sung*                      *nkhe*  
Field work                      strange village                      hill                      have gone beyond

*Ntene*                      *gunglo*                      *tsu*                      *aninyalo*  
Always                      going                      saying                      do not send me

*Ale le*                      *gyeng*                      *aching*                      *bimo*  
I                      girl                      twice                      servant                      cannot be

(This may be roughly translated as follows —

“I have been given in marriage to a stranger  
That girl has her relations round her  
But I am like a flower all alone  
If I could have worked in the home fields  
I should have been happy  
But they would not leave me to work in the field I loved  
I have come far over the hills to work in a strange village  
Even when I was on my way I begged them not to send me  
Girlhood and strength to work come twice to none”)

It is sufficient to give a free translation of the second song  
Girls sing it at work, but one takes the part of a man. It  
refers to a girl and a husband feeding helpers in their field

The woman sings —

“ I have married a man with polished ear rings  
He cuts bamboo cups for the helpers ”

The man sings —

“ I have married a girl whose beads are the best in the  
company  
She offers dishes of food to all the helpers ”

The woman sings :—

“ I am not strong Do not be angry at my light load  
You are as beautiful as a rhododendron bud and a red  
berry ”

## PART VI

### LANGUAGE

No one but a specialist can ever hope adequately to analyse a Naga language, with its tones, its rich vocabulary and its *nuances* of meaning that are so hard to grasp. In this section I am compelled to deal, not with one language, but with three, and no claim is made to anything better than a brief and inadequate outline. My consolation is that the Rengma languages will survive long after the disappearance of ancient customs, and that there will be material for philologists to study for many a long year. For the sake of brevity, I have here and throughout this monograph used the letters A, B and C for the three languages. A is the language of the Southern group of Western Rengmas, B the language of the Northern group of that section of the tribe, and C that of the Eastern Rengmas. Language A is spoken in Tseminyu, the four lower "khels" of Tesophenyu, Phesinyu, Sentenyu, Choshinyu, Therugunyu, Thegwepegedenyu, Nishinyu and Tsokonkonyu, and by the Rengmas who have migrated to the Mikir Hills. Language B is spoken in the upper "khels" of Tesophenyu, and in Kotsenyu, Kotsenishinyu and Kitagha. Language C is spoken in the three Eastern Rengma villages of Meluri, Lephori and Sahunyu. There are dialectical differences between the languages as spoken in different villages, and I have taken that of Tseminyu as the standard for A, that of the upper "khels" of Tesophenyu as the standard for B, and that of Meluri as the standard for C. The languages are strictly local even in Tesophenyu, where two widely differing languages are spoken in the same village. There certain clans which have moved from the upper to the lower "khels" have abandoned their original language.



and adopted that of their new neighbours. From the Rengma words given in earlier sections of this book the reader will have noticed that B and C are far more like each other than either is like A, which is as one would expect, since the Eastern Rengmas migrated from Kitagha, where B is spoken.<sup>1</sup> Speakers of B and C can usually, but not always, understand each other,<sup>2</sup> but a speaker of A is utterly unintelligible to either of them. A undoubtedly has close affinities with Angami, while B and C are nearer to Lhota and Sema.

The Rengmas share the common Naga tradition<sup>3</sup> that God gave them writing on skins, but that a dog ate the skins, and since then they have not been able to write. The only attempt to reduce the language to writing is that of the American Baptist Mission, who have issued the Gospel of St John, some Scripture portions, and some hymns in language A. Unfortunately, however, it was impossible to give proper supervision to the work, and the inconsistencies of spelling and of the cutting up of sentences into their component parts make this work worthless as a standard. I have therefore disregarded it, and have adopted the following method of spelling.

### *Vowels*

- A long as in "father"
- A short as u in "but"
- E long as a in "say"
- E short as e in "then."
- I long as in "machine"
- I short a little longer than i in "sin"
- O long as in "open"
- O short as in French "dot"
- U long as oo in "tool"
- U short as in "full"
- U as u in "turn"

<sup>1</sup> See p 8

<sup>2</sup> The dialects of Sahunyu and Lephori are very alike, and are more easily understood by a speaker of B than is the dialect of Melum

<sup>3</sup> See *Sema Nagas*, p 299.

I have used no diacritical marks, and tones have only been noted where of special importance. Only syllables which are very strongly long or short have been so marked. There are no diphthongs, and when two vowels occur together each is sounded separately.

### *Consonants*

*B* as in English

*C* never used alone

*Ch* represents a sound between *ch* in "church" and *ts* in "outset"

*D* as in English

*F* as in English, but only used after *P* and *K*

*G* as in English. When it follows *n* it is pronounced as in "sign," with a slight nasal sound.

*H* as in English. It aspirates the consonant it follows.

*J* as in English

*K* as in English

*Kh* as in "workhouse"

*L* and *N* are used for a sound which is intermediate between the two, the appropriate letter being used according to the letter which the sound approaches nearest in the particular word.<sup>1</sup>

*M* as in English

*P* as in English

*Ph* is pronounced between *f* and *ph* in "uphill"

*Q* is not used

*R* as in English

*S* as in English

*Sh* as in English

*T* as in English

*Th* as in "priesthood," never as in "the"

*V* as in English

*W* as in English

*X* not used

*Y* as in English

*Z* as in English, but often with a sound of *y* added

<sup>1</sup> Of two people speaking the same word one will often seem to use *N* and the other *L*, and it will be noticed that in B and C languages an *L* in one language often becomes an *N* in the other and vice versa.

*The Article*

For the indefinite article *me* (A), and *kesu* (B and C) are used and follow the noun "A man" =

*Temr me* (A)

*Meshu kesu* (B)

*Nr kesu* (C)

In A and B and C *me* and *kesu* are the ordinals for "one" Special words are used where the singleness is emphasised Thus "one only" = *peleme* or *mentr* (A), *kesutong* (B), *kesumpa* (C) In A *peleme* is used for persons only, and *mentr* for things *Kesutong* and *kesumpa* are used for both persons and things

For the definite article the demonstrative pronouns (*q v*) are used, often shortened to *gu* in A

Suffixes are added to the article not to the noun

*Methr me-le siso* (A)

*Amesu kesu-na shuta* (B)

*Amesu kesu-nu situ* (C)

A cow died

-le, -na, and -nu being nominative suffixes

*Nouns**Gender*

There is no gender, but special words are used when it is desired to emphasise the sex of living things. For example, "male man" = *pechenyu* (A), *mpoza* (B), *nimpari* (C), "woman" = *tenenyu* (A), *niza* (B), *nimzari* (C) These terms can be combined with other words, and we get "male child" = *pechenyu ntsenyu* (A), *mpoza 'nga* (B), *nimpa atsa* (C), and "female child" = *tenenyu ntsenyu* (A), *niza 'nga* (B), *nimzari* <sup>1</sup> *atsa*

In A *tse* and *lu* are used to denote the sex of all animals with horns and hoofs, whether wild or domesticated Thus "bull" = *methitse*, "cow" = *methilu*, "sambhur stag" = *teshong tse*, "sambhur hind" = *teshong lu*. For large animals with paws the words denoting sex are *hupfu* and

<sup>1</sup> In *nimpa atsa* the termination -ri is dropped, but not in *nimzari atsa*

*hile* Thus "dog" = *tenhyr hipfu*, "bitch" = *tenhyr hile*, "tiger" = *teme hipfu*, "tigress" = *teme hile* For all small animals *zupfu* and *zulu* are used Thus "male rat" = *tepfu zupfu* and "female rat" = *tepfu zulu* For pigs special words are used, the wild and domestic species being differentiated Thus "wild boar" = *nyu bong*, "wild sow" = *nyu chu*, "domestic boar" = *tebwa le*, "domestic sow" = *tebwa byeng* For all birds, wild or domestic, *guzu* and *gubyeng* are used. Thus "domestic cock" = *tero guzu*, "domestic hen" = *tero gubyeng*, "cock hornbill" = *hungtsing guzu*, "hen hornbill" = *hungtsing gubyeng*

In B the terms are not so numerous *Sepung* is used to denote the male sex in all animals except the pig and the dog, and *ala* the female sex in all animals and birds whatsoever Thus "bull" = *amesu sepung*, "male rat" = *amezu sepung*, "cow" = *amesu ala*, "bitch" = *aphu ala*, "sow" = *avu ala*, "wild sow" = *asatsu ala*, "hen hornbill" = *achu ala* For the pig the special male term is *la* Thus "domestic boar" = *avu la* When wild boars are being spoken of, both words are added to the generic term Thus "wild boar" = *asatsu avu la* For a male dog the reduplication *aphula* is used, and "male dog" = *aphu aphula* For cock birds of all kinds *apung* is used Thus "cock hornbill" = *achu apung*

In C there are more special terms than in B For domestic horned animals *avo* and *awi* are used Thus "bull" = *amesu avo*, "cow" = *amesu awi* For certain game animals there are special words "Sambhur stag" = *akhru arepu*, "sambhur hind" = *akhru ashetru*, "barking-deer buck" = *amisi asuvo*, "barking-deer doe" = *amisi aseni* For domestic and wild pigs the terms are different Thus "domestic boar" = *avu la*, "domestic sow" = *avu zu*, "wild boar" = *asu chi*, "wild sow" = *asu tu* For a male tiger *wu* is used, but for the male of all other animals, including dogs, *numpari*, the word used for human beings, is used For all other animals, including the tigress, the female sex is denoted by *numzari*, as in the case of human beings Thus "male dog" = *ashu numpari*, "male rat" = *amezu numpari*, "tigress" = *ami numzari* "Domestic

cock" = *awr vo*, and "domestic hen" = *awr la*. These words are added when the sex of wild birds is emphasised. Thus "cock hornbill" = *arochn 'wr vo*, and "hen hornbill" = *arochn 'wr la*.

### Number

There are no terminations denoting the dual or plural. The nearest approach is the suffix *-dang* in A, used of people or animals, with the implication that they are collected together. Thus "he" = *tsu*, and "they" = *tsudang* when it is desired to convey the idea of a group.

### Case

There are no case terminations, suffixes taking their place. The nominative suffix is *le* (A), *na* (B), *nü* (C). This is used with both transitive and intransitive verbs. Thus "Resillo will come" = *Resillole reti* (A), *Resillona ana* (B), *Resillonü torunn* (C). With a negative verb it is frequently dropped in all three languages. Thus "I have no cloth" (literally "My cloth is not") = *A 'pr ndr* (A), *i 'tsü mmr* (B), *i 'tsu meny* (C). In A and B it is also often dropped in such simple descriptive sentences as "Your cloth is bad". This would be *n 'pr gwāmu* (A), *n 'tsü mehe*<sup>1</sup> (B). In C, however, it is retained in such sentences, and the phrase would run *no 'tsünü khamusun*. In cases other than those given above it is very rarely dropped in A, but quite frequently in B and C, especially in hurried speech.

The commonest suffixes in use are these —

	A	B	C
To, at, from	<i>khr, nyu, kha</i>	<i>wr, we, sha</i>	<i>vu</i>
On, at	<i>kha, khr</i>	<i>amr, we</i>	<i>nye, a</i>
Behind, after	<i>sr, srkhr, thrngkhr</i>	<i>akhungsa,</i> <i>sang</i>	<i>se</i>
Outside	<i>asaokhr</i>	<i>amr</i>	<i>anyula</i>
Inside, into	<i>nyukhr</i>	<i>anr</i>	<i>alo</i>
Above	<i>sakha</i>	<i>mwr</i>	<i>anyrvu</i>
By the side of	<i>atekhr</i>	<i>mawr</i>	<i>anato</i>
Among (of persons and animals)	<i>azakha, dangkha</i>	<i>aza</i>	<i>azvya, azila</i>

<sup>1</sup> In B "bad" = *mehe* with the final *e* low, and "good" = *mehe* with the final *e* high—an excellent example of the great importance of tone in the language.

	A	B	C
Among (of things)	<i>achukha</i>	<i>mano</i>	<i>azla</i>
To (with verbs of speech)	<i>ka, no</i>	<i>ku</i>	<i>vu</i>
Under	<i>asvngkha</i>	<i>makhukho</i>	<i>makhukhu</i>
Together with	<i>zeng</i> (of people), <i>ka</i> (of things)	<i>kwayi</i>	<i>si</i>
Because of	<i>genyu</i>	<i>tsu</i>	<i>nung</i>
For (on behalf of, because of, and of price)	<i>genyu</i>	<i>lna</i>	<i>nu</i>
Till, as far as	<i>gyengrho</i>	<i>metām</i>	<i>nsho</i>
In (of time)	<i>nu, kha</i>	<i>metām</i>	<i>wa</i>
Between	<i>azakha, achukha</i>	<i>zuguza</i>	<i>rikepe</i>
With, by	<i>lo, pe, lope</i>	<i>pila, pe, ya, na</i>	<i>nu</i>
Beyond	<i>pere, perekhe</i>	<i>khakhaa</i>	<i>tuwvu</i>
On this side of	<i>hikhpong</i>	<i>hawwa</i>	<i>hawvu</i>
Near	<i>akhokhr, akhokha</i>	<i>maatsang</i>	<i>akhetuwa</i>
Rather near	<i>khenyokha</i>	<i>khuzā</i>	<i>khushenyu</i>
Before	<i>mhodu, mhodukhr</i>	<i>etuu</i>	<i>tuwu</i>
After	<i>si</i>	<i>asung</i>	<i>asewa</i>
Towards	<i>pamo</i>	<i>she</i>	<i>shun</i>
Through (of land)	<i>nokheng</i>	<i>khayr</i>	<i>khari</i>
Through (of water)	<i>pfuthe</i>	<i>pfutsu</i>	<i>khari</i>
Through (of things)	<i>telu</i>	<i>khamae</i>	<i>khari</i>
On (of a day)	<i>nyu</i>	<i>wi</i>	<i>a</i>
In the presence of	<i>mhudekha</i>	<i>too</i>	<i>khutuawang</i>

### *Prefixes*

In A many nouns, and in B and C nearly all, begin with the letter *a*. This is dropped when the preceding word ends in a vowel or when speaking quickly. In all three languages *ke* or *ku* forms the first syllable of nearly all adjectives. In ordinary speech this is almost always dropped. Sometimes the *a* found prefixed to nouns is prefixed to the *ke* or *ku* of adjectives. There seems to be no rule, and it is added or not according to the taste of the speaker.

### *Adjectives*

All adjectives except those denoting race follow the substantives they qualify.<sup>1</sup> Thus "new house" = *kha keshing* (A), *azung kethr* (B), *aze kurte* (C).

<sup>1</sup> The only exception to this rule that I know is *khungkhu* (A), meaning "false." "False words" = *khungkhu zo*.

Racial terms used as adjectives precede their substantives. Thus "Sema house" = *Sammu kha* (A), *Shaayr 'zung* (B), *Mezurr 'ze* (C)

The comparative is formed by *nyukhi* (A), *mwi* (B), *ni* (C) placed after the noun with which comparison is made.

A	<i>khale</i>	n	<i>kha</i>	<i>nyekhi</i>	<i>gong</i>	(A)
I	<i>'zungna</i>	n	<i>zung</i>	<i>mwi</i>	<i>ketsowa</i>	(B)
I	<i>'ze</i>	no	<i>'ze</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>telochi</i>	(C)
My	house	your	house	than	big	

In B *wa* is often used instead of *mwi*. *Mwi* and *ni* are suffixes and *wa* means "the one"

The superlative, when the reference is to persons or animals, is formed by the suffixes *dangkha* (A), *aza* (B), *azya* (C), meaning "among". Thus "This is the biggest mithan" = *Gu dangkha hile kugonggu* (A), *asi aza ha ketsowa* (B), *asi azya ha telochi* (C), all meaning literally "Among mithan this the big one". When inanimate objects are referred to *achukha* (A), *mano* (B), and *azila* (C) are used.

The specific "one" is expressed by adding *gu* (A), *wa* or *kwo* (B), and *wa* (C) to the adjective. Thus "small" = *kesheng* (A), *kuza* (B), and *akuza* (C), and "the small one" = *keshenggu* (A), *küzawa* or *küzakwo* (B), and *aküzawa* (C).

### Numerals

*Cardinals* The cardinals are as follows.—

A	B	C
1 <i>me</i>	<i>kesü</i>	<i>ke, kesü</i>
2 <i>khohüng</i>	<i>kem</i>	<i>kem</i>
3 <i>khüngshäng</i> or <i>shäng</i>	<i>keshäng</i>	<i>keche</i>
4 <i>pezi</i>	<i>mezu</i>	<i>mezu</i>
5 <i>pfü</i>	<i>manga</i>	<i>manga</i>
6 <i>tsaro</i>	<i>tuo</i>	<i>taro</i>
7. <i>tsanü</i>	<i>tüghü</i>	<i>terü</i>
8 <i>tütse</i>	<i>tüza</i>	<i>tüze</i>

A.	B.	C.
9 <i>tukhū</i>	<i>tukhu</i>	<i>tokhu</i>
10 <i>tsaru</i>	<i>taa</i>	<i>tera</i>
11 <i>tsarū me chū</i> (lit "ten one added ")	<i>taake</i>	<i>terake</i>
12 <i>tsarū khohūng</i> <i>chū</i>	<i>taakem</i>	<i>terakem</i>
13 <i>tsarū khūng-</i> <i>shāng chū</i>	<i>taakecham</i>	<i>terakecha</i>
14 <i>tsaru pezi chū</i>	<i>taamezu</i>	<i>teramezu</i>
15 <i>tsarū pfu chū</i>	<i>taamanga</i>	<i>teramanga</i>
16 <i>nki pamo tsaro</i> (lit "six towards twenty ")	<i>kwū she tūo</i> ( <i>kwū</i> is a con- traction of <i>mukwūng</i> )	<i>mukwe shun toio</i>
17 <i>nki pamo tsarū</i>	<i>kwū she tūghū</i>	<i>mukwe shun terū</i>
18 <i>nki pamo tūtse</i>	<i>kwū she tūza</i>	<i>mukwe shun tūze</i>
19 <i>nki pamo tukhu</i>	<i>kwū she tūkhu</i>	<i>mukwe shun tokhu</i>
20 <i>nki</i>	<i>mukwūng</i>	<i>mukwe</i>
21 <i>nki me chū, etc</i>	<i>mukwūng kesū, etc</i>	<i>achera kesū, etc</i> (From this point the method of counting in C alters )
26 <i>shenru pamo</i> <i>tsaro, etc</i>	<i>chaa she tūo, etc</i>	<i>achera toro, etc.</i>
30 <i>shenru</i>	<i>chaa</i>	<i>chera</i>
31 <i>shenru me chū,</i> <i>etc.</i>	<i>chaa kesū, etc</i>	<i>azura kesū, etc</i>
40 <i>henzi</i>	<i>zua</i>	<i>zura</i>
41 <i>henzi me chū,</i> <i>etc</i>	<i>zua kesū, etc</i>	<i>anrya kesū</i> (An irregular form is used from 41 to 49 )
50 <i>hempfū</i>	<i>ten</i>	<i>ten</i>
51 <i>hempfu me chū,</i> <i>etc</i>	<i>ten kesū, etc</i>	<i>arora kesū, etc</i>
60 <i>hentsara</i>	<i>apyampero</i>	<i>rora</i>



A	B	C
61 <i>hentsaro me chu,</i> etc	<i>apyampero kesu,</i> etc	<i>anura kesu,</i> etc
70 <i>hentsanu</i>	<i>apyamtughu</i>	<i>rura</i>
71 <i>hentsanu me chu,</i> etc	<i>apyamtughu kesu,</i> etc	<i>azera kesu,</i> etc
80. <i>hentütse</i>	<i>apyamtüza</i>	<i>zeia</i>
81 <i>hentütse me chu,</i> etc	<i>apyamtüza kesu,</i> etc	<i>akhura kesu,</i> etc
90 <i>hentükhu</i>	<i>apyamtükhu</i>	<i>khura</i>
91 <i>hentükhu me chu,</i> etc	<i>apyamtükhu kesu,</i> etc	<i>amezawa kesu,</i> etc
100 <i>tsi</i>	<i>meza</i>	<i>meza</i>
101 <i>tsi o me,</i> etc	<i>meza no kesü,</i> etc	<i>meza ke kesu,</i> etc
200 <i>tsihüng</i>	<i>meza kenr</i>	<i>meza kenr</i>
300 <i>tsishäng</i>	<i>meza keshäng</i>	<i>meza keche</i>
400 <i>tsizi</i>	<i>meza mezu</i>	<i>meza mezu</i>
500 <i>tsi pfu,</i> etc	<i>meza manga,</i> etc	<i>meza manga,</i> etc
1000 <i>ye</i>	<i>meza taa</i>	<i>anye</i>

### Fractions

The only true fractional numeral is *paha* (A), *pohong* (B), *awechu* (C) =  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Otherwise fractions are expressed as shares (*zing*, A, *ashu*, B, *kekesu*, C), knowledge of the total number of shares into which a thing is to be divided being assumed. Thus we get, on the assumption of four equal shares —

$\frac{1}{4}$  = *zing me* (A), *ashu kesu* (B), *kekesu kesu* (C)

$\frac{1}{2}$  = *zing hüng* (A), *ashu kenr* (B), *kekesu kenr* (C)

$\frac{3}{4}$  = *zing shäng* (A), *ashu keshäng* (B), *kekesu keche* (C)

“The whole” would be spoken of either as “four shares,” or by the proper word for “the whole”—*apang* (A), *mapen* (B), *ave* (C)

A man will, however, often own a share in a living animal such as a mithan or pig, and these shares are “legs,” a man owning one, two or three “legs.” Thus  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a live pig = “three legs”—*pha shäng* (A), *achu keshäng* (B), *achu keche* (C)

*Ordinals*

For "1st" and "2nd" there are special words. From "3rd" onwards ordinals are formed by suffixing "the one" (*gü*, A, *wa*, B and C) to the cardinals, C adding a prefix *a*. Thus we get —

	A	B	C
1st	<i>akharri</i>	<i>atu</i>	<i>apowa</i>
2nd	<i>kharrigü si</i> <sup>1</sup>	<i>atuwa 'sung</i>	<i>apowa 'sewa</i>
3rd	<i>khängshänggü</i>	<i>keshängwa</i>	<i>akechewa</i>
4th	<i>pezigü</i>	<i>mezuwa</i>	<i>amezuwa</i>

*Pronouns*

The personal pronouns are as follows —

	A	B	C
First person singular	<i>a</i> (on low note)	<i>he</i>	<i>hi</i>
First person dual	<i>ni</i>	<i>isheni</i>	<i>hise</i>
First person plural	<i>agung</i> or <i>ungung</i>	<i>ito</i>	<i>hiri</i>
Second person singular	<i>ne</i> or <i>no</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>no</i>
Second person dual	<i>hayi</i>	<i>nsheni</i>	<i>nose</i>
Second person plural	<i>hagung</i>	<i>nto</i>	<i>nori</i>
Third person singular	<i>a</i> (on high note)	<i>ma</i>	<i>ma</i>
Third person dual	<i>awu</i>	<i>mani</i>	<i>mase</i>
Third person plural	<i>anyungung</i>	<i>makhu</i>	<i>mari</i> or <i>nori</i>

The alternative forms for the first person plural in A seem to carry exactly the same meaning. For the second person plural A has a special form, *hagungdang*, which conveys the idea of separation from the speaker and is fairly accurately represented in English by the phrase "you folk". In C the words for the third person plural, *mari* and *nori*, have different meanings. *Mari* suggests distance and means "those," while *nori* suggests nearness and means "these". Men use these terms with reference to distance only, but a woman may never use *mari* when speaking of a group which contains her husband, however far away the group may be, or *nori* of a group in which he is not included, however near it may be. C has no word for "they" by which distance or nearness is not implied.

<sup>1</sup> In all the languages the term for 2nd = "after the first"

In A and B *anyungung* and *makhü* carry no implication of distance, there being special words by which distance or nearness is implied. These are *tsüdang* (A) and *tsatu* (B), corresponding to *marri*, and *hidang* (A), and *matu* (B) corresponding to *nori*. In A and B women use these terms with the same restrictions as in C.

Suffixes are added in the ordinary way. Thus "I" = *ale* (A), *hena* (B), *hünü* (C), "from me" = *akha* (A), *hewe* (B), *hivu* (C). But, except in the nominative, the *e* of *ne*, the second person singular in A, is dropped and the word becomes *n* or, before *p* or *b*, *m*. In B "my" = *i* and "your" (singular) = *n*. In all other cases the root is used for the possessive. Thus "my cloth" = *a 'pr* (A), *i 'tsu* (B), *hi 'tsu* (C), and "his cloth" = *a 'pr* (A), *ma 'tsu* (B), *ma 'tsu* (C). In C, however, when the pronoun ends in *ri* it is split and the noun placed in the middle. Thus "their cloth" = not *marri 'tsu*, but *ma 'tsu ri*. For the dative the root without suffix is used in all three languages. For the emphatic "I myself," "you yourself," etc., *mpfu* (A), *ketong* (B), *mpa* (C) are added. Thus "I myself" = *ampfulu* (A), *heketongna* (B), *himpanni* (C).

### *Demonstrative Pronouns*

In A *tsugu* is used with no particular idea of distance, and can be translated both as "this" and "that," according to the context. When distance is emphasised, *higu* is used for "this" and *tigü* for "that." All three follow the noun.

In B *hoarwa* = "this" and follows the noun, and *katsu* = "that" and precedes the noun. Thus "this cloth" = *atsü hoarwa*, and "that cloth" = *katsü 'tsu*.

In C *hāma* = "this" and precedes the noun, and *thu ti* = "that" and is split, with the noun in the middle. Thus "this cloth" = *hāma 'tsu* and "that cloth" = *thu 'tsu ti*.

"Anyone" is expressed by *paha* (A), *pahang* (B), *su* (C) after the word for "person." Thus "anyone" = *temi paha* (A), *thona pahang* (B), *anuri su* (C). Anything is expressed by *thame* (A), *mowa* (B), *azanyu* (C). The nega-

tive "no one," "nothing" is expressed by *temi*, *thame* (A), *thona*, *mowa* (B), *anuri*, *azanyu* (C) with a negative verb

"Another" is translated by *kecha* (A), *kepa* (B and C) following the noun

"Each" is translated by *kenzing* (A), *kesha* (B), *kesku* (C), following the noun

"Some others" is translated by *paha* . *paha* (A), *pahang* *pahang* (B), *wuri* *wuri* (C) following their nouns

### *Interrogative Pronouns.*

Interrogative pronouns are as follows "Who?" or "which?" of persons = *sugu* or *digu* (A), *tho* (B), *tha* (C), the first two following the noun and the last preceding it "What?" = *nyu* (A), *mowa* (B), *ma* (C) "Which?" of things = *digu* (A), *khaowa* (B), *tha* (C)

"How many?" is translated by *dize* (A), *khazu* (B), *kheza* (C), all following the noun

"Of what kind?" is translated by *ntsuteho* (A), *khatri* (B), *mokamchi* (C), all following the noun

### *Relative Pronouns*

No pronoun is used in an ordinary relative clause, a verbal noun being employed instead Thus, *bin* (A), *pang* (B), *pe* (C) being the roots of the verbs "to be," we get

*Tsunyu kebingu* (A)

*Tsuatsa kepangwa* (B)

*Chevu keperi* (C)

"The man who is there"

Literally "There the being one"

*Tsunyu kevinnyu* (A)

*Tsuatsa kepangkhung* (B)

*Chevu keperi* (C)

"Those who are there"

Literally "There the being ones," there being no difference between singular and plural in C For "all who," however,

*dize* (A), *khazu* (B), *khezakhe* (C) are used as ordinary relative pronouns

Similarly "whoever" is translated by *sugtu* (A), *thowa* (B), *ihawa* (C), and "whatever" by *nyu* (A), *mo* (B), and *momo* (C)

### *The Verb*\*

Rengma verbs are conjugated for tense, but not for number and person. Even the tense terminations are often omitted when a man is speaking quickly and the context makes the meaning clear.

The root of the ordinary word for "is" is *bin* (A), *pang* (B), *peve* or *pe* (C). The conjugation is irregular and is as follows —

	A	B	C
Present	<i>binyo</i>	<i>pang</i>	<i>peve</i> or <i>pe</i>
Past	<i>binyoteri</i> or <i>bin</i>	<i>palaapang</i>	<i>penave</i>
Future	<i>bintri</i>	<i>heta</i>	<i>venn</i>
Imperative	<i>binlo</i>	<i>panglo</i> or <i>sapanglo</i>	<i>velo</i> or <i>savelo</i>

Another form of the past tense—*binyolari*—conveys an implication of completion.

"Is not," in the sense of "does not exist," is *ndi* (A), *mmi* (B), *menyi* (C). C has the same form for the past negative, but in A "was not" = *nditeri*, and in B *palaam-pang*.

"Is not" after an adjective is *binmo*, *binkemo*, *mo* or *kemo* (A), *nyung* (B), *ma* (C). The form for the past tense is the same.

In A there is a special form *binzung*, which conveys the meaning of remaining over or being to spare. Thus "I have another house" = *akha kecha binzung*. The past is *binzungteri*, the future *binzungti* and the negative *ndizung*. Thus "I have no rice left" = *a shu ndizung*. There is no corresponding form in B and C.

While the above are the ordinary forms of the verbs "to be," there are in A and B, but not in C, special forms implying

a less permanent state These are *hunyo* (A) and *tong* (B) For example, in such a phrase as "Resillo is in Kohima" *binyo* would be used if it were implied that he lived there, and *hunyo* if it were implied that he had come in for the day The conjugation is —

	A	B
Present	<i>hunyo</i>	<i>tong</i>
Past	<i>hunyoteri</i>	<i>tenta</i>
Future	<i>hunti</i>	<i>tenna</i>
Negative (all tenses)	<i>hümü</i>	<i>meten</i>

The conjugation of Rengma verbs is rendered difficult by the large number of forms carrying special shades of meaning I shall take my examples from the verb "to say," the roots of which are *zo* (A), *khi* (B), *za* (C)

#### *Present Tense*

The present tense is always formed by the addition of the present tense of the verb "to be" to the root Thus —

"Is saying" or "says" = *zobinyo* (A), *khypang* (B), *tozave* or *kezave*<sup>1</sup> (C)

In A and B *hunyo* and *tong* can be substituted for *binyo* and *pang* to give the appropriate shade of meaning In A *zinyo* is used instead of *binyo* with verbs of motion Thus *güzinyo* = "is going" *Gübinyo* would mean "has gone and has arrived"

#### *Past Tense*

In A, when talking fast, the root only is sometimes used Ordinarily however the terminations *so* (A), *ta* (B), and *tu* (C) are added to the root Thus —

"Said" = *zoso* (A), *khita* (B), *tozatu* (C) Other terminations are used when a very strong perfect is implied Thus —

"Have certainly said" = *zolaso* (A), *khveta* (B), *tozamtu* (C)

In A a slightly less strong perfect would be expressed by *zolaru*, and in B by *khmung*. Also in A *lo* can be used as a

<sup>1</sup> The prefix *to* or *ke* is usually added to the root It seems to make no difference at all to the meaning which prefix is used

past termination with verbs of seeing and hearing. In B and C the terminations *zan* and *nu* are used when a reported speech follows.

The imperfect is formed by the terminations *binyoteri* or *binyolarü* (A), *panu* (B), and *hunyuwe* (C). Thus —

“Was saying” = *zobinyoteri* or *zobinyolarü* (A), *khpanu* (B), and *tozahunyuwe* (C). In A the termination *zinyoteri* is used instead of *binyoteri* with verbs of motion.

### *Future Tense*

The ordinary terminations for the future are *ti* (A), *na* (B), *nn*<sup>1</sup> (C). Thus —

“Will say” = *zoti* (A), *khna* (B), *tozann* (C). There is in addition a stronger form. Thus —

“Will certainly say” = *zoloti*<sup>2</sup> (A), *khnyaoang* (B), *tozahunn* (C).

### *Imperative*

In all three languages a sharp order is often expressed by the root of the verb only. The common forms are, however, as follows —

“Say” = *zolo* (A), *khilo* (B), *tozalo* (C).

“Say” (a stronger form) = *zochi* or *zolochi* (A), *khiti* (B), *tozache* (C).

“Go on saying” = *zobinlo* (A), *khipelalo* (B), *tozahuwilo* (C).

In A and B, but not in C, there are two further special forms —

“Go and say” = *zota* or *zolota* (A), *khnyelo* (B).

“Come and say” = *zore* or *zolare* (A), *khnyate* (B).

The negative imperative is expressed as follows —

“Do not say” = *zonya* or *zonyachi* (A), *mekhila* (B), *mtozatamu* (C).

“Be sure not to say” = *zobinya* or *zobinyachi* (A), *mekhialoto* (B), *mtozatamulo* or *mtozatsatanlo* (C).

<sup>1</sup> The sound is something between a prolonged “n” and “nu”.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 303 under verb “to be able”.

### Participles

The participles are as follows, the present participle being expressed by reduplication of the root

“Saying” = *zozo* (A), *khukhi* (B), *tozatoza* (C)

“Having said” = *zonzi* (A), *khilannu* (B), *tozannu* (C)

### Conditional Clause

A special form is used to express the conditional “If he says” = *zolo*<sup>1</sup> (A), *khito* (B), *tozanung* (C)

### The Negative

The special forms used for the negative imperative have been given. Otherwise in A the negative is formed by adding *mo* after the verb, the termination usually being dropped. Thus —

“Will eat” = *teti*

“Will not eat” = *temo*

In B and C the negative prefix is *me*, *mo* or *ma* according to euphony and precedes the verb, which usually drops its termination. Thus —

“Will drink” = *zina* (B), *zunn* (C)

“Will not drink” = *mezū* (B), *mezu* (C)

### The Verbal Noun

The verbal noun is formed by prefixing *ke* to the root, and is of great importance in all three languages, being used in all forms of subordinate clause except the conditional. Its use in relative clauses has already been shown under “Relative Pronouns”. Other typical uses are as follows —

“When he was there” = *tsūnyu kevincha* (A), *tsūatsa ke pangwe* (B), *chevu kepea* (C), all meaning “at the being there”

“Because he was” = *kevin genyu* (A), *kepangtsu* (B), *kepenung* (C)

When the verb “to be” forms part of the termination the *ke* of the verbal noun comes between the termination

<sup>1</sup> The final *o* is on a higher note than in the imperative termination



and the root Thus.—“ While saying ” = *zokebinkha* (A), *khikepangwe* (B), and *tozakevu* (C)

### *Verbal Modifiers*

Certain suffixes added to the root of a verb modify its meaning The tense terminations follow the modifying suffix

*Bu* (A), *khe* (B), *khem* (C) imply completion  
Thus—*te* (A), *tša* (B), *kucha* (C) = eat  
*tebu* (A), *tsakhe* (B), *kuchakhem* (C) = eat up

*Lo* or *la* (A), *a* (B), *khe* (C) are used with verbs of perception to imply completion Thus.—

*nu* (A), *za* (B), *kena* (C) = “ hear ”  
*nülo* (A), *zāa* (B), *kenakhe* (C) = “ hear plainly ”  
*hu* (A), *mo* (B), *mu* (C) = “ see ”  
*hulo* (A), *moa* (B), *mukhe* (C) = “ see plainly ”

The suffixes *shi* (A) and *chi* (B) imply deliberateness Thus in A *psü* = “ hand over quickly ” and *psüshi* = “ present ”, *su* = “ drink ” and *süshi* = “ suck the breast ”, *zo* = “ speak ” and *zoshi* = “ speak deliberately.”

To form a permissive verb A and B add *lo* and *tsu* respectively after the root, and C *te* before the root Thus —

*su* (A), *süche* (B), *shu* (C) = “ cut ”  
*sulo* (A), *süchetsü* (B), *teshü* (C) = “ allow to cut.”

### *Infinitive Mood*

In Rengma the root of the verb is used in certain cases where the infinitive is used in English An example is the use with the verb “ to want to ” (*nu*, A, *mung*, B, *ngü*, C). Thus.—

“ I want to go ” = *Ale gu nübinyo* (A), *He wa mungpang* (B), *Hinü wa ngüve* (C)  
“ I do not want to go ” = *Ale gü nümu* (A), *He mowa mung* (B), *Hinü mowa ngü* (C)

Similarly the verb "to be able" (*lo* A, *a* B, *ra* C) follows the root. This verb has an irregular conjugation in all three languages

"Can say" = *zologwa* (A), *khapang* (B), *tozarana* (C)

"Cannot say" = *zolomo* or *zoloshu* (A), *khampang* or *mekhkya*<sup>1</sup> (B), *mtozara* (C)

"I shall be able to say" = *zoluti*, *zolutile* or *zoloayigwa*<sup>2</sup> (A), *khana* (B), *tozaranave* (C)

"I shall not be able to say" = present negative form in A and B, and *mtozaranave* (C)

"Could say" = *zolo* (A), *khata* (B), *tozaratu* (C)

"Could not say" = *zolomo* (A), *khimra* or *khimryecha* (B), *mtozara* (C)

### Interrogative

A question is indicated by adding *ho* (A), *nu* (B), or *lo* (C) to the termination of the verb. For a negative interrogative the ordinary negative form of the verb is used, the tone of voice indicating the question

### Verbal Synonyms

In many cases where in English the same verb is used the Rengma uses different verbs to express similar acts. For example.—

"To wash the head" = *so* (A), *metstü* (B), *gokru* (C)

"To wash the arms or legs" = *sphu* (A), *pho* (B), *gokru* (C)

"To wash the face" = *sphu* (A), *pho* (B), *khumza* (C)

"To wash the hands" = *tsa* (A), *metse* (B), *khumtso* (C)

"To wash the body" = *lu* (A), *pho* or *küzü* (B), *küzü* (C).

"To wash vessels" = *khüstü* (A), *khowo* (B), *gokru* (C)

"To wash clothes" = *thu* (A), *asü* (B), *rüshu* (C).

Another example is as follows :

"To cut" = *su* (A), *süche* (B), *shü* (C)

"To cut straight down" = *thü* (A), *ketantsü* (B), *thu* (C).

<sup>1</sup> *Zoloshu* and *mekhkya* are emphatic forms

<sup>2</sup> *Zolutile* and *zoloayigwa* are emphatic forms

- "To cut on a slant" = *nti* (A), *kewitsa* (B), *witsa* (C)  
 "To cut through" = *zina* (A), *tentsu* (B), *teihu* (C)  
 "To cut and kill" = *dushula* (A), *sutisha* (B), *relacha* (C)  
 "To cut off an enemy's head" = *gwen* (A), *wi* (B), *thu* (C).  
 "To cut off an enemy's ears" = *nyeno* (A), *h* (B), *rhethu* (C)  
 "To cut off an enemy's limbs" = *zyi* (A), *o* (B), *khoro* (C)  
 "To cut off an animal's head" = *thelo* (A), *tsi*<sup>1</sup> (B), *thu* (C)

### Adverbs

Adverbs in all three languages are ordinarily formed by adding *sa* to the adjective, the suffix, if it exists, being retained. Thus from *gwa* (A), *kemehe* (B), *kemih* (C) = "good," we get *gwas* (A), *kemehesa* (B), *kemihsa* (C) = "well." In A a common termination for an adverb is *lo*. Thus "quickly" = *wohatselo* or *tsolo*. In B and C duplication of a syllable is preferred, and "quickly" = *wawa* or *shushu* (B) and *shushsa* (C).

For "very" in A *so* is added as a suffix, the termination *lo* being dropped. Thus "very well" = *gwasaso* and "very quickly" = *wohatseso* or *tsoso*. In B *sashusa* is used before the adjective, which drops the prefix. Thus "very well" = *sashusa mehe*. In C *shetu* is added after the adverb. Thus "very well" = *kemihsa shetu*.

Adverbs of time are as follows:—

	A	B	C
To-day .	<i>ntu</i>	<i>nangsu</i>	<i>ngosu</i>
Yesterday	<i>ndu</i>	<i>ani</i>	<i>loni</i>
The day before yesterday	<i>ndumu</i>	<i>khunwa</i>	<i>khunwa</i>
To-morrow	<i>senduki</i>	<i>tetsu</i>	<i>tutu</i>
The day after to-morrow	<i>haduki</i> (the <i>u</i> is on a low note)	<i>petsu</i>	<i>chutu</i>
On the third day .	<i>haduki</i> (the <i>u</i> is on a high note)	<i>zitsu</i>	<i>chuturwo</i>

<sup>1</sup> In A *thelo* is used for cutting off a tiger's head, but *gwen* for cutting off its tail. In B *wi* is used for cutting off both the head and tail of a tiger. A tiger is regarded as in many ways akin to a man (see p. 97).

In B only there is a word *zinya* meaning "on the fourth day" There is no word in any of the three languages for "the day before the day before yesterday" The words for years are as follows —

This year	<i>ntunye</i>	<i>kyesu</i>	<i>chisu</i>
Last year	<i>ndunye</i>	<i>khulaowa</i>	<i>khanawa</i>
Next year	<i>tekenkhi</i>	<i>weytsu</i>	<i>wituwa</i>

Other typical adverbs are —

Now	<i>ntsokha</i>	<i>khuli</i>	<i>khumi</i>
Then	<i>tsukokha</i>	<i>tsutasha</i>	<i>khesi</i>
When ?	<i>dikokha, duni</i>	<i>khatasha</i>	<i>khesilo,</i> <i>khunyu</i>
Sometimes	<i>khikha</i>	<i>khataashano</i>	<i>khesikeno</i>
Always	<i>akhutongteng,</i> <i>ntene</i>	<i>ampong,</i> <i>akhuhangchu</i>	<i>rezarne</i>
Here	<i>hikha hinyu</i>	<i>aha, haha</i>	<i>haru</i>
There	<i>tsukha, tsunyu</i>	<i>tsuatsa</i>	<i>chevu</i>
Where ?	<i>dikipong</i>	<i>khee</i>	<i>khi, khilo</i>
How far ?	<i>ditena</i>	<i>khato</i>	<i>kheta</i>
On the right	<i>nzizing</i>	<i>azwa</i>	<i>azwovu</i>
On the left	<i>ngwazing</i>	<i>tongruwa</i>	<i>azwovu</i>
Together	<i>awu</i>	<i>manyi</i>	<i>masu</i>
Separately	<i>kuchacha</i>	<i>kupapa</i>	<i>kikupapa</i>
How ?	<i>ntsate, nyutse,</i> <i>thio</i>	<i>khatsano</i>	<i>mokamchi,</i> <i>motalo</i>
Suddenly	<i>whatsi</i>	<i>shusa</i>	<i>shitasha</i>
For nothing (free)	<i>khundrungnyu</i>	<i>kechila</i>	<i>muchuchu</i>
Unnecessarily	<i>khungkhukhun-</i> <i>drung</i>	<i>melikamesa</i>	<i>zuchasila</i>

### Conjunctions

In A alone is a word, *lo*, found for "and," and none of the languages has a word for "or" For "both . . and" the words are *ko* (A), *la* . . *la* (B), *nga* (C), following the nouns which they connect For "also" *ko* (A), *la* (B), *nga* (C) are used following the noun "But" is translated by *tsayi* (A), *isamu* or *isato* (B), *antu* (C). B and C also use *isato* and *antu* for "and so," but A has a separate word, *tsuno* "Therefore" = *tsugenyu* or *tsanzuyo* (A), *tsah* or *isatenu* (B), *chelanu* or *anu* (C), and "then" = *sikha* (A), *tsasangwe* (B), *chasevu* (C)

*Syntax*

The syntax is very simple, the order of a sentence being subject, object, verb. In reporting speech *oratio recta* is ordinarily used. Thus "Prurto said he (i e Prurto) went" = *Prurtole zolarü ale guso* (A), *Prurtona khizani he wata* (B), *Prurtonü tozanu i watü* (C), all meaning "Prurto said, 'I went' "

*Conventional Phrases*

Two people meeting will say to each other *Gwa binmo?* (A), *Mehe pang ma?* (B), *Mihü atenung* (C), the first two sentences meaning "Are you not well?", and the last "You are probably well". On parting the conventional phrase in A is *Gwakemo tenya* = "Do not be unwell". In B and C the phrases are *Kemehe sapanglo* and *Kemahü savelo* respectively, both meaning "Be well".

*Abuse*

A section on abuse must needs contain matter which is hardly fit for the ordinary reader, but no one need read this portion who does not want to, and to omit it would be to disregard a very interesting sidelight on Rengma mentality.

Blasphemy is absolutely unknown to Rengmas, as it is to all Nagas. When a Rengma wishes to be really offensive he uses some phrase expressing a wish that his opponent may die an "apotia"<sup>1</sup> death. For example, in A a man will say *Teme 'ntung* ("May a tiger devour you"), *Ne rihügu* ("May you be an enemy's corpse"—i e "May another village kill you"), or *Ne repe temi* ("May you be an (enemy's) head"). In B common terms of abuse of this kind are *Atemüwa naang* ("May a tiger devour you"), *Akwena chüti* ("May you fall from a tree"), *Atsuma na puwa* ("May you drown"). In C corresponding phrases are *Amüwu chalo* ("May a tiger eat you"), *Arrhi no shelo* ("May an enemy kill you").

A milder form of abuse is to call down severe illness. Thus in A there is *No nchentsü* ("May you waste with

<sup>1</sup> See p. 221

magic"), and *No yhangshing yhangshu* ("May you toss with illness at night"), and in C *Azu khulo achu khulo* ("May you pass blood and water")

Nagas never seem to call each other rude names, except such mild ones as "dog," etc., but it is exceedingly insulting to look at one's opponent and pull down the lower lid of one's eye.<sup>1</sup> The phrases used with this gesture are *Ayhe vu telo* (A) and *Mang kekhu tsalo* (B), both meaning "Eat the dung of my eye," and *Hinotha ɾamezi* (C), meaning "Lick my eye"

Obscene abuse is common. For example, in B a man will say "*Izahantsa tsalo*" and a woman "*Ishu tsalo*," both meaning "Eat my private parts," which are thereupon exposed if the quarrel is really violent. In C the corresponding man's phrase, *Iza rhamkho*, is generally only used on a special occasion, if a man has been boasting to his friends of having overcome the virtuous scruples of some girl and she denies the truth of what he says, it is considered quite in order for him to address her in public in this way, as if challenging her to take an oath. Women have their own particular forms of abuse for use when quarrelling with each other. In C the chief weapon in the female armoury is seized on and a common phrase is "*No mezi amwuntu yacha*," meaning "May a tiger pull out your tongue and eat it." In A and B there are phrases *Amotsi khumutse emole* (A) and *Imeso azukiza kunyomowo lanyena* (B), which women alone use in their own quarrels, and which are considered so terrible that they are only screamed out in a village about once in a generation. Everyone, however, knows them in case they are needed.<sup>1</sup> They mean, roughly, "Your face is a pale, washed-out edition of my private parts"

<sup>1</sup> See *Semas Nagas*, p. 411

## VOCABULARY

The following brief vocabulary of common words shows the close affinity between languages B and C, and the tendency in them to use the prefix *a* for nouns. All three languages use the prefix *ke* or *lu* for adjectives.

English	A	B	C
Enemy	<i>terrh</i> or <i>arrh</i>	<i>ayr</i>	<i>arrh</i>
"Dao"	<i>nze</i>	<i>anu</i>	<i>anyu</i>
Spear	<i>m</i>	<i>apui</i>	<i>apfe</i>
Bow	<i>tholevu</i>	<i>ala</i>	<i>tsokrala</i>
Arrow	<i>tho</i>	<i>alachu</i>	<i>atsokre</i>
Shield	<i>gr</i>	<i>atsonghe</i>	<i>achohu</i>
House	<i>kha</i>	<i>azung</i>	<i>aze</i>
Cloth	<i>pr</i>	<i>atsu</i>	<i>atsu</i>
Meat or animal	<i>ie</i>	<i>asa</i>	<i>asa</i>
Bird	<i>tegu</i>	<i>aowa</i>	<i>amowa</i>
Sambhur	<i>teshong</i>	<i>atukhe</i>	<i>akhra</i>
Serow	<i>tenyu</i>	<i>amozu</i>	<i>amozu</i>
Barking deer	<i>teze</i>	<i>amshu</i>	<i>amshu</i>
Monkey	<i>tekhu</i>	<i>asukhi</i>	<i>akuriewa</i>
Gibbon	<i>tepfwong</i>	<i>asupi</i>	<i>akhwu</i>
Porcupine	<i>ntsung</i>	<i>akhapo</i>	<i>akhapru</i>
Pangolin	<i>tepyu</i>	<i>asephu</i>	<i>asuphu</i>
Tiger	<i>menda</i> or <i>teme</i>	<i>ametuwa</i>	<i>amawa</i>
Elephant	<i>chung</i>	<i>asa ketuwa</i>	<i>aru</i>
Termite	<i>teshe</i>	<i>amukha</i>	<i>amukha</i>
Hornet	<i>khughu</i>	<i>amozu</i>	<i>awe</i>
Mithan	<i>gu</i>	<i>asi</i>	<i>asi</i>
Buffalo	<i>sentsung</i>	<i>ayr</i>	<i>arrh</i>
Cattle	<i>me</i>	<i>amesu</i>	<i>amesu</i>
Goat	<i>tenu</i>	<i>anyinu</i>	<i>anyinu</i>
Pig	<i>tebwa</i>	<i>avu</i>	<i>avu</i>
Fowl	<i>tero</i>	<i>awuu</i>	<i>awu</i>
Bird	<i>tegu</i>	<i>aowa</i>	<i>amowa</i>
Meat	<i>te</i>	<i>asa</i>	<i>asa</i>
Fish	<i>tsuhu</i>	<i>anga</i>	<i>anga</i>
Field	<i>lo</i>	<i>azi</i>	<i>azu</i>
Paddy	<i>shu</i>	<i>asu</i>	<i>amathu</i>
Boiled rice	<i>chu</i>	<i>aneng</i>	<i>ashu</i>
Millet	<i>nsu</i>	<i>asenta</i>	<i>achota</i>
Job's-tears	<i>nsha</i>	<i>ashentha</i>	<i>ashetha</i>
Maize	<i>samphuruchi</i>	<i>santapfo</i>	<i>aphuzi</i>
Taro	<i>vyr</i>	<i>api</i>	<i>api</i>
Head	<i>repe</i>	<i>ayr</i>	<i>ahu</i>
Hair	<i>repehu</i>	<i>ayrasung</i>	<i>ashe</i>
Eye	<i>yhe</i>	<i>mang, anyang</i>	<i>anotha</i>
Nose	<i>nhukhong</i>	<i>antsa</i>	<i>angapu</i>
Mouth	<i>mmung</i>	<i>apong</i>	<i>apo</i>
Tooth	<i>hu</i>	<i>aha</i>	<i>aha</i>
Tongue	<i>nnyr</i>	<i>ameh</i>	<i>amezi</i>
Ear	<i>nyeting</i>	<i>akhwela</i>	<i>akhena</i>
Neck	<i>nguda</i>	<i>asung</i>	<i>akhu</i>
Body	<i>mm</i>	<i>akho</i>	<i>asatsa</i>
Hand	<i>mbe</i>	<i>akhwen</i>	<i>akhet</i>
Thigh	<i>nding</i>	<i>apetsu</i>	<i>apichu</i>
Calf	<i>nchung</i>	<i>amezong</i>	<i>ameze</i>
Foot	<i>npha</i>	<i>achu</i>	<i>achu</i> or <i>ampa</i>

English	A	B	C
Heart	<i>nnyung</i>	<i>aypam</i>	<i>aluve</i>
Back	<i>nnyezung</i>	<i>atsu</i>	<i>asehu</i>
Bone	<i>arhu</i>	<i>mawu</i>	<i>arru</i>
Blood	<i>azi</i>	<i>azu</i>	<i>azu</i>
Village	<i>reni</i>	<i>anyu</i>	<i>anyu</i>
"Morung"	<i>rensi</i>	<i>azughu</i>	<i>awikhu</i>
Hearth	<i>ihensu</i>	<i>aihukha</i>	<i>amethu</i>
Fire	<i>ma</i>	<i>anyr</i>	<i>ami</i>
Water	<i>zu</i>	<i>atsu</i>	<i>achu</i>
Stone	<i>tso</i>	<i>alung</i>	<i>alung</i>
Earth	<i>khazu</i>	<i>azi</i>	<i>azu</i>
Sky	<i>tsung</i>	<i>atsaang</i>	<i>tatchuwo</i>
Thunder	<i>tsungkesong</i>	<i>atsaang keshuwa</i>	<i>atsu keshu</i>
Lightning	<i>tsungkhukhupyu</i>	<i>atsaangpyu</i>	<i>achure</i>
Sun	<i>yhekha</i>	<i>ani</i>	<i>areni</i>
Moon	<i>asu</i>	<i>asha</i>	<i>asa</i>
Star	<i>shengu</i>	<i>awachi</i>	<i>awachi</i>
Good	<i>gwa</i>	<i>kemehe</i> (final e high)	<i>kemih</i>
Bad	<i>gwamu</i>	<i>kemehe</i> (final e low)	<i>khamusus</i>
Long	<i>ketong</i>	<i>kesi</i>	<i>kesu</i>
Short	<i>kezu</i>	<i>kemelo</i>	<i>kemelo</i>
Big	<i>gong</i>	<i>ketsowa</i>	<i>telochi</i>
Small	<i>kesheng</i>	<i>kuza</i>	<i>kuza</i>
Hard	<i>kenko</i>	<i>kekhang</i>	<i>kekho</i>
Soft	<i>kempya</i>	<i>kepya</i>	<i>kekenya</i>
Heavy	<i>kengsiyu</i>	<i>kekheyong</i>	<i>kekhezo</i>
Light	<i>kengshe</i>	<i>kempese</i>	<i>kempi</i>
Black	<i>kemetseng</i>	<i>kemmero</i>	<i>alcheni</i>
White	<i>kechong</i>	<i>kemechi</i>	<i>kemechi</i>
Red	<i>kemhong</i>	<i>kemwe</i>	<i>kemru</i>
New	<i>keshung</i>	<i>kehi</i>	<i>kurte</i>
Old	<i>arre</i>	<i>kewha</i>	<i>kurwhi</i>
False	<i>khungkhu</i>	<i>meh kemetsa</i>	<i>akurhi</i>
Rich	<i>khunya</i>	<i>khapaong</i>	<i>nirhiti</i>
True	<i>kechang</i>	<i>kemetsa</i>	<i>azutisa</i>
Go	<i>gu</i>	<i>wa</i>	<i>wa</i>
Come	<i>re</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ru</i>
Desire	<i>nu</i>	<i>mung</i>	<i>ngu</i>
Say	<i>zo</i>	<i>khi</i>	<i>za</i>
See	<i>hu</i>	<i>mo</i>	<i>mu</i>
Hear	<i>nu</i>	<i>za</i>	<i>na</i>
Die	<i>si</i>	<i>shu</i>	<i>si</i>
Eat	<i>te</i>	<i>tsa</i>	<i>isa</i>
Drink	<i>su</i>	<i>zu</i>	<i>zu</i>
Give	<i>psu</i>	<i>khi</i>	<i>isu</i>
Sit	<i>dung</i>	<i>pe</i>	<i>pe</i>
Hit	<i>vu</i>	<i>kehe</i>	<i>phe</i>



## PART VII.—APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### CEREMONIES OF THE AGRICULTURAL YEAR

BELOW are set down the actual “gennas” observed in 1931 at Tseminyu. They were recorded for me by Khonke of that village, and give a complete picture of the yearly communal religious observances. Details of the more important will be found elsewhere, according to the references given. I have added in brackets the corresponding “gennas” of the Tesophenyu group, though these were not necessarily observed on the same day. As explained above (p. 164), *kennü* (A) and *khamani* (B) mean a day on which households refrain from work, *ketsannu* (A) and *kechenna* (B) days on which the village is closed, and *nga* (A) and *akhu* (B) great festivals, on most days of which the village is closed.

January 4th — *Zu küli zu kethü kennü*—“water-washing, rice-beer-preparing ‘genna’” Rice-beer is prepared for the great washing ceremony with which the year opens. In the Tesophenyu group the corresponding *Akhu khemeta kesa kechenna* is observed only once in seven years. (See pp. 174 sqq.)

January 6th and 7th — *Zü küli nga*—“water-washing festival”

January 15th — *Tsorokendu ketsannü* (*Yuekhu kechenna*, B). This is one day’s “genna” to prevent village fires. It is held at a season when the dry weather increases the risk of fires. On this day nothing can be made, for whatever is made will be burnt later.

January 16th — *La kethü kennü*—“pot-making ‘genna’”

(See p 68 ) It marks the end of the season during which pots can be made On the day after it the sowing of the millet begins The corresponding Tesophenyu "genna" is the *Lowr layang kechenna* ("red thread pot 'genna'") No pots are made in villages of the Northern group, and it marks the end of the period when thread may be dyed red (See p 67 )

January 21st — *Pyeng kekhe ketsannu* (*Akhukr kechesa kechenna*, B)—both meaning "hoe laying down 'genna'" A day's rest marking the end of millet-sowing

February 10th — *Pyu kepe kennu*—"body-sinking 'genna'" (*Nkameyhr kamenyr kechenna*, B) "Body sinking" implies bad luck, and households observe this "genna" to ensure good fortune when hunting

March 10th to 15th — *Lo tsung nga* (*Zr sho akhu*, B)—"field clearing festival" (See p 80 ) The rice "jhum" have been prepared for sowing

March 25th — *Nsu kesr kennu* (*Asenta keshu khaman*, B)—"millet dying 'genna'" Households refrain from work to prevent the sprouting millet from withering

March 26th — *Teri kebong nra kebong kennu*—"red cane red thread 'genna'" Red dye may not be used after this

March 27th — *Tuchong kehr ghr kehr kennu*—"bead polishing armlet polishing 'genna'" (See p 27 ) A day to prevent evil coming from new ornaments The Northern villages have no corresponding day

March 28th — *Meih gnda keyr kennu* (*Amesu amummung khahap khaman*, B)—"Cow's stomach opening 'genna'" (See p 81 ) Cattle are killed, and worms in their stomachs thereby prevented from injuring the crops Everything is now ready for the sowing of rice—the most important crop

April 1st — *Tsr che ketsannu* (*Keshen teghr kechenna*, B)—"rice-seed-falling 'genna'" (See p 81 ) After this the sowing of rice begins

April 11th — *Zong ru kennu*—"tenth-day 'genna'" (*Taa khaman*, B) A day of rest after nine days of sowing

April 16th — *Tegweng keche kennu*—"hail falling 'genna'" (*Amukhrayr kecha khaman*—"wind hail coming 'genna,'" B) No time is lost in observing a "genna" for hail, which

is fairly frequent in April This day is kept whether hail falls or not If it does fall it is repeated.

April 20th — *Pyeng kekhe kennü* Repeated as on January 21st In theory it marks the end of rice-sowing, but in practice anyone who has not finished does so after it

April 25th — *Nsü keteng kennü* (*Asenta kapeaghe khamani*, B) — “millet rotting ‘genna’” To protect the young millet, which is well up by now

April 28th — *Nga zu kethü kennü* — “festival rice-beer making ‘genna’” (*Aohüng kezung kechenna*, B) A day of preparation for the 30th

April 30th — *Lo me kuntsung nga* — “field root damping ceremony” (*Khü zü resha akhu*, B) The first of a series of days on which special ceremonies are performed for the young rice (See p 81)

May 1st — *Zu mhung mhü keyi ketsannü* — “rice-beer first blowing sprinkling” (*Azi kephas kechenna* — “field beginning,” B) The next day is “open,” to allow necessary work to be done

May 3rd. — *Lo kesü kennü* (*Azi keshü kechenna*, B) — “field dying ‘genna’” A day of rest to protect the young rice.

May 4th — *Gwong zü lo keching kennü* (*Khuh tsu azi kepwe khamani*, B) — “flood rain field carrying away ‘genna’” A day of rest to prevent the first heavy rains washing the rice seedlings out of the ground

May 9th — *Teshe kennü* — “termite ‘genna’” (*Amükha atsowe khamani* — “termite red ant ‘genna,’” B) The first of a series of days of rest intended to protect the crops from insect pests.

May 10th — *Nungshü kennü* — “grub ‘genna’” (*Alu azanu khamani* — “grub ear-eater ‘genna,’” B)

May 14th — *Nchenyu kennü* — “ear-eater ‘genna’” *Nchenyu* = *azanu*, B. It is an insect which lays its eggs in the ears of rice

May 16th — *Khyuma kennü* — “burrowing grub ‘genna’” (*Aghe ayang kemehe khamani* — “insects all bad ‘genna,’” B).

May 20th — *Nsü ro kethü ketsannü* (*Asenta akhe khü kesa kechenna*, B) — “millet offerings making ‘genna’” A day kept for the millet, which is now getting high

May 24th —*Lo khi lo nyu kennu*—"fields mildew fields insects 'genna'" (*Azi khamani*—"insects 'genna,'" B) A day kept for pests in general

May 27th.—*Tsebe lo ro kethu ketsannu*—"young rice fields offerings making 'genna'" (*Awiru atsü kitung kechenna*—"fowls' eggs' offering 'genna,'" B) Offerings are made for the welfare of the young rice

Then follows a short lull in the ceremonies

June 5th *Lo khunghong kennu*—"fields rust 'genna'" (*Azi keshu khamani*—"fields dying 'genna,'" B). A day's rest to prevent the rice from withering

June 8th *Tsung kerhi hi kennu* (*Atsaang kowo kechi khamani*, B)—"sky raining asking for 'genna'" This begins a short series of "gennas" for weather, rats and spirits

June 9th —*Tsung kegwa hi kennu* (*Atsaang kemehe kechi khamani*, B)—"sky fine asking for 'genna'"

June 10th —*Tepfu keshu kennu* (*Amezü ketashu khamani*, B)—"rats destructive 'genna'" On this day neither wood nor anything else may be cut, lest the rats nibble the rice

June 11th —*Arori keshu kennu* (*Azang ketashu khamani*, B)—"evil spirits destructive 'genna.'" The next day is "open," so that essential work may be done

June 13th —*Kürezö ketsannu* (*Ankapfu rechenna*, B)—"waste 'genna'" Kept in order that people may not be wasteful of their food

From now on there follows a period comparatively free from "genna" The fields have to be kept weeded and everyone is very busy

June 20th.—The "genna" of May 10th is repeated.

June 29th —The "genna" of May 9th for pests is repeated

July 4th —Rice-beer is made for the big path-clearing ceremony

July 6th —*Tele nga*, from the Sema Telni (*Anung kesa akhu*—"field-path clearing festival," B) The big mid-summer festival, lasting eight days, during which paths to the fields are cleared of jungle (See pp 82, 83.)

July 13th —*Tsung kethu kennu*—"clearing 'genna'"

(*Anung kesa khamani*—"field-path clearing 'genna,' B) This marks the end of the path-clearing festival On this day no work is done

July 19th —The "genna" for pests of May 14th is repeated

July 23rd —The "genna" for rats of June 10th is repeated.

July 25th —The "genna" of May 3rd to protect the rice is repeated

August 4th —The "genna" for rats of June 10th is again repeated

August 6th —The "genna" of June 11th for evil spirits is repeated

August 7th —*Tsung kungbhu kennu*—"sky wind 'genna'" Observed to prevent wind flattening the standing crops On this day nothing may be felled, and water may not be splashed about In the Northern group the "genna" of April 16th for wind and hail is repeated about this time

August 8th —The "genna" for hail of April 16th is repeated

August 10th —*Khapur keching ketsannu* (*Aketsong khetung kechenna*—"spirit worshipping 'genna'" (See pp 180, 181 )

August 17th —*Shurü lo ro kethü ketsannü*—"ears fields offerings making 'genna'" (*Awüü khüwu kechenna*—"fowl singeing 'genna,'" B) Offerings are made for the crops

There now follows a period free from "gennas" The crops are ripening and have to be watched and protected from birds and animals

September 5th —*Kha kedrung zu kethu kennü*—"house-ceremony rice-beer preparing 'genna.'" There is no corresponding "genna" in the Northern group. Rice-beer is prepared for the harvest ceremonies

September 8th —The "genna" of June 13th for wastefulness is repeated

September 9th and 10th —*Khong kepeng ketsannu*—"dish holding 'genna'" (*Azi wi ketsa kechenna*—"field reaping eating 'genna,'" B), the important ceremony which immediately precedes harvest (See p 84 )

From now on there is a long period with no "gennas" All are busy with harvest, the fields ripening at different times according to soil, aspect and elevation

October —There are no "gennas" in this month

November 14th —The "genna" of June 13th for waste-fulness is again repeated now that the crops are in

November 15th —*Shu lo kethu ketsannu*—"rice field offering 'genna,'" (*Asu mi ketsa kechenna*—"rice top eating 'genna,'" B) The ceremony of first fruits

November 24th —*Nga zu keihu kennu*—"festival rice-beer preparing 'genna,'" Liquor is prepared for the great *Ngada* festival which closes the year (See p 173) This is always the day before the late November or early December full moon

November 26th —*Zu kephe*—"liquor opening" Offerings are made on graves

November 27th —*Ngada (Akhv tsu, B)*—"great festival"

November 28th —*Kepye zong*—"dancing day"

November 29th —*Rangsu zong*—"visiting day" The next day is "open"

December 1st —*Nga nyukhi*—"festival end"

December 2nd —*Ma gwa kethu kennu*—"fire good making 'genna,'" (*Anyi khamani*—"fire 'genna,'" B) Nominally a "genna" to prevent fires Really a much needed day of rest

December 3rd —The "genna" of June 10th for rats is repeated If this be not done they will damage the stored rice

December 5th —The "genna" of June 11th for evil spirits is repeated, so that they may not trouble the village in the days of rest before the next agricultural year begins

## APPENDIX II

### MENSURATION

#### *Measures of Distance*

THE only fixed standard measure I know of in the Rengma country is a stone on the old site of Thegwepegedenyu, on which are cut two notches about ten inches apart. Four times the distance between the notches is the girth of the pig which may be demanded as a fine for adultery and similar serious offences. Otherwise standard measures of distance are always based on the human body. The smallest is "one finger breadth" (*nzung ngaro me*, A, *azungza kesu*, B, *atechu kesu*, C). The reckoning proceeds "two finger breadths" (*nzung ngaro khohung*, A, *azungza ken*, B, *atechu ken*, C), and so on, up to eight finger breadths, which equal the distance between the outstretched tips of the thumb and index finger, known as a "short span" (*khü rhung*, A, *akha khamlua*, B, *atichü khamlua*, C). The next measurement above this is a "long span" (*khü tong*, A, *akha kheswa*, B, *atichü khesuwa*, C), the distance between the tips of the thumb and middle finger. There is no fixed relationship between the spans and the cubit (*nchu*, A, *akhumyong*, B; *akhenyo*, C), a much-used measure for which the distance between the finger-tips and the point of the elbow is taken, but all the above measures are used together, and a stick might be described as a cubit, two long spans and three finger breadths long. Above the cubit is the "shoulder" (*mbütung*, A; *atapfu*, B, *asaphu*, C), the distance from the finger-tips to the shoulder. Above this is the distance from the finger-tips to the middle of the chest, known as *nm paha* ("half the outstretched arms," A), *aka pohong* ("half the upper body," B) and *atoso* (C). From the far shoulder to the finger-tips is called *mbütung pere*

*kegweng* ("going across the shoulder," A), *atapfu pohong khakhaa* ("going half across the shoulders," B), *asaphu kukari* ("going across the shoulder," C) Lastly there is the outstretched arms from finger-tip to finger-tip (*nm*, A, *anām*, B, *ale*, C)

The size of mithan and cattle is invariably stated in terms of the length of their horns, and for this there are special measurements. The lowest is the distance from the joint of the wrist and hand to the finger-tips (*mvengo*, A, *ampanyong*, B, *amuza*, C), and above this is the distance from the joint of the wrist and forearm to the finger-tips called *santsesha* ("creeper berry," A<sup>1</sup>) *maha koyo* ("arm division," B), *akhusa khutsepe* ("bracelet-wearing place," C) Lastly there is the distance from the middle of the forearm to the finger-tips, known as "gauntlet-wearing place" (*veng khavu bingki*, A, *akwang khekong apam*, B) The Eastern Rengmas have no corresponding measurement, but have a special one for the long horns of buffaloes, their most important domestic animal. This is called "armlet-wearing place" (*saterū khutsepe*), and is the distance from finger-tips to a point midway between the biceps and the elbow-joint.

For distances on the ground the minimum measure is "one foot" (*mphapi*<sup>2</sup> *me*, A, *achukha kesū*, B, *ampa kesū*, C) Two feet is "feet in line" (*mpa*<sup>2</sup> *kūketeng*, A, *achukha kūkuasemi*, B, *ampa kūkute*, C) A "pace" is *nkongkhu* (A), *khukha* (B), *lekha* (C) There are no terms for long distances. A man would ordinarily describe two points known to his hearer, and say that some distance was equal to the distance between them. If he wanted to explain how far some field was below the village, he would say how many times a man would ordinarily rest on the way up with a load<sup>3</sup>—a very sensible way, too, for what really matters is not how far away the field is by actual measurement, but how long it takes to get there and back. For distances up to a day's march a man points to where the sun was when he started and when he arrived, for long journeys he would give the number of days required to get there

<sup>1</sup> The origin of this curious term seems to be unknown.

<sup>2</sup> *Mphapi* = "footprint" and *mpa* = "foot."

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Ao Nagas*, p. 398



There are no measures of height, which is usually a very unimportant matter in everyday life, though a man might describe something as being as high as the side or centre-post of a house. But in a country where rivers often have to be forded, it is important to be able to explain how deep they are. We therefore find a large number of terms, and water is described as reaching to (*khr*, A, *tho*, B, *rucho*, C) the ankle-bone (*ankhennyeng rhu*, A, *achü anyang*,<sup>1</sup> B, *akhi 'rrü*, C), the small of the leg (*mpa tsongki*, A, *achunong ketse*, B, *azechi*, C), the calf (*nching*, A, *amezong*, B, *ameze*, C), the knee (*nko*, A, *akhphu*, B, *akhwo*, C), the thigh (*nding*, A, *apetsu*, B, *apichi*, C), the buttock (*ntingtse*, A, *ashukwazü*, B, *amesi*, C), the waist (*nse*, A, *akhushi*, B, *akhushi*, C), the navel (*nnu*, A, *apfuyi*, B, *abozu*, C), the heart (*nnying*, A, *aypam*, B, *aluwe*, C), the armpits (*nnyasung*, A, *ahakhu*, B, *atatsu*, C), the neck (*nguda*, A, *asüng*, B, *akhu*, C), the ears (*nyeting*, A, *akhwela*, B, *akhena*, C) and the top of the head (*mpeshung*, A, *ashuni*, B, *alukri*, C). These measurements are all that are necessary for the Western Rengmas, through whose country no big rivers run, but the villages of the Eastern Rengmas overlook the valley of the Tizu, and they describe its long, still pools as so many "kicks" (*kecho*) deep.<sup>2</sup>

For measurements of girth there is another special set of terms. The circle of the thumb and index or middle finger of one hand is *bengketong* (A), *khahang* (B), and *harke* (C). A "small circle" is that of the thumbs and index fingers of the two hands, and is called *khutsong kezü* (A), *khuntsung khamlua* (B), and *atüchü khamlua* (C).<sup>3</sup> A "big circle" (*khutsong ketong*, A, *khuntsung kesü*, B, *acheluwa*, C) is the circle of the two thumbs and middle fingers. In the Tseminyu group there is no special word for the circle of the arms, *nni*, the length of the outstretched arms, being used, but in the other groups the circle of the arms of one man is *khukhu kesü* (B and C), and that of two men *khukhu keni*, and so on. Pigs are never described in terms of weight or length, but always of girth. As, however, they

<sup>1</sup> *Achü anyang* = literally "the eye of the foot"

<sup>2</sup> See *Lhota Nagas*, p. 228

<sup>3</sup> The same word as that used for a span. See p. 316

cannot very conveniently be measured by the hand, a thong of bamboo or a piece of creeper is put round the animal's stomach, and then measured off in the flat measure of cubits, etc. Birds are never described in terms of length, but always by their girth in finger-circles. A fish is described as being as thick as the wrist, arm, calf or thigh.

### *Measures of Capacity*

Grain is the only article for which measures of capacity are used. The reckoning is in baskets, which are of various sizes. The smallest is called *zyongchi* (A), *tumeli* (B), or *ameli* (C) and holds about 5 lbs of unhusked rice. This is the standard wage for one day's work. Above this the Tseminyu group have a measure *khudo paha* (half a *khudo*) holding about 15 lbs, which is the wage for three days' work, and the Tesophenyu group one called *achiti*, holding about 25 lbs, which is the wage for five days' work. For six days' work one *khudo* holding about 30 lbs is paid in the Tseminyu group. The *khudo*, *achiti*, and *ameli* measures are the standard measures for selling rice, but for loans the standard measures are *lone* (A), *amaha* (B), and *akhu* (C). One *lone* =  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *khudo*, one *amaha* =  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *achiti*, and one *akhu* = 4 *ameli*. In the Tesophenyu group a big *amaha* (*amaha ketsowa*) is used, equalling two *achiti*.

Harvest is reckoned in loads (*lenyukhu*, A, *aluchi*,<sup>1</sup> B, *akhuwitsa*, C). In the Tseminyu group about 100 loads, and in the Tesophenyu group about 125 go to one granary (*shuse*, A, *ayi*, B), which is reckoned as just enough to sustain a childless couple for a year. The Eastern Rengma unit is a bin (*asu*) made of bamboo matting. These vary greatly in size, and may contain anything from 20 to 50 loads. A big granary will hold six average bins.

In Sentenyu and Phesinyu a special method of measuring the year's harvest obtains. The owner of a field heaps his rice as high as possible on mats, and walks round it with very long strides (*nmngendo*). A circumference of seven strides means enough rice to fill one granary, ten strides enough for

<sup>1</sup> Millet is lighter and more bulky than rice. The Western Rengmas used special words—*khushu*, A, *akhuchi*, B—for loads of millet.

two granaries, eleven strides enough for three, and so on, reckoning one more granary for every stride

*Measures of Weight*

The Eastern Rengmas tell me they have no measures of weight at all, and I have certainly never seen any used by them. The Western Rengmas use a bismer balance (*khusevu*, A, *khukhachong*, B), with a fixed fulcrum, such as is common throughout most of the Naga tribes. Nowadays the ordinary Indian "seer" is invariably used, but formerly a block (*khukhu*, A, *khukha*, B) of salt was used, the length and breadth of a hand and about an inch thick. Double this was called *makhuvyeng* (A) or *mavuwateng* (B), and the largest weight was a "parcel of salt" (*chi dung*, A, *amechü akhong*, B), which was equal to eight blocks.

### APPENDIX III

#### NAMES OF NEIGHBOURING TRIBES

EACH of the three groups of Rengmas has its own name for the surrounding tribes. They are as follows :—

Angami— *Segenyu*, A,  
              *Tsonyanyu*, B,  
              *Ararr*, C  
Sema— *Sammu*, A,  
          *Shaay*, B,  
          *Mezurr*, C.

Southern Sangtam—*Pochorr*, C

The Western Rengmas, never having been in touch with this tribe, have no name for them.

Lhota— *Segwenyu*, A ;  
          *Cheny*, B.  
Ao— *Nankanyu*, A,  
      *Nankwaa*, B  
Chang— *Mre*, B.  
Plainsman—*Asanyu*, A,  
              *Asaa*, B.

The word for Ao is derived from Lungkam, the Ao village lying nearest to the Rengma country. The Eastern Rengmas know nothing of Lhotas, Aos and Plainsmen, and have no names for them, and the Tesophenyu group alone seem to have heard of the Changs

## APPENDIX IV

### DIVISION OF TIME

THE Rengma year (*ache*, A, *amapur*, B, *amav*, C) is divided into three seasons. The cold weather (*tsangsu*, A, *khisi atsong*, B, *khüso*, C) lasts roughly from October to March, and is followed by the hot weather (*tsenyüing*, A, *khuyüing atsong*, B, *khüze*, C), which goes on till the rains (*ntsu küri*, A, *mezo atsong*, B, *mezü*, C) break about June. These abate by October, when the skies are blue again and the mists fill the valleys in the mornings till the sun dispels them. Clouds gather about Christmas time, and there are usually light winter rains, which in Phesinyu are called *sobu 'tsong*, a term explained to me as meaning "the time when women feel a cold draught when they lift their skirts to answer a call of nature"<sup>1</sup>. In Tesophenyu they are called *ma azi kepa 'tsong*—"the season when the serf tried to get fields". The story goes that a rich man once allotted his fields for the coming year before the winter rains began. He offered one of his serfs the choice of three "jums," but the man, having tried the soil of all of them and found it hard, refused to accept any. When the rain fell he tested the soil again and, finding it soft, wanted all three. The Christmas clouds soon roll away, but in a few weeks the air becomes so hazy with dust from the dry ground that even the nearest ranges are blotted out. The rains clear the air, but the clouds settle on the high tops, and long views are rare till the first welcome signs of the cold weather.

The months (*asu*, A, *asha*, B, *asa*, C) observed by the Rengmas are lunar months, an intercalary month being added when necessary to keep the calendar correct. In the following table the English months are given as a rough

guide, but it must be understood that there is no tribal authority to keep the calendar uniform and decide when an intercalary month ought to be inserted. In each village the old men are at liberty to order an intercalary month to be inserted when they think necessary, with the result that different villages are often in different months at the same time<sup>1</sup>. In the table below the months are given under A, B and C for the three groups. From the meaning of the names it will be noticed how greatly the hot habitat and dependence on irrigated terraces of the Eastern Rengmas have caused their agricultural calendar to differ from that of the Western.

	A	B	C
January	<i>Lo kephu 'su</i> "The month of choosing fields"	<i>Azi kepha 'sha.</i> "The month of choosing fields"	<i>Pocha 'sa</i> "The month of clearing wood from the old fields"
February	<i>Zu kuli 'su</i> "The month of the <i>Zu kuli</i> ceremony," or <i>La kethu 'su</i> "Pot making month"	<i>Patsa 'sha</i> "The month of resting"	<i>Pasa 'sa</i> "The month of resting"
March	<i>Nsu keheng 'su.</i> "The month of sowing millet"	<i>Asenta kecha 'sha</i> "The month of sowing millet," or <i>Patsu 'sha—</i> "The month for finishing work"	<i>Azu gwe 'sa</i> "The month of clearing old fields"
April	<i>Lo tsung nga 'su</i> "The month of the <i>Lo tsung</i> feast"	<i>Zi sho sha</i> <sup>2</sup> "The month of the <i>Zi sho</i> cere- mony"	<i>Ani ketsowa 'sa</i> "The month of burning the 'jhum's"
May.	<i>Lo shi su</i> "The month for sowing the fields"	<i>Azi keche 'sha</i> "The month for sowing the fields"	<i>Achota ketse 'sa.</i> "The month for sowing millet"

<sup>1</sup> I have known the different "khels" of the same Angami village to differ in their reckoning as to what month it is, and come to me to settle their quarrel. Rengmas, as far as my experience goes, are at least unanimous in the same village.

<sup>2</sup> Actually these ceremonies are often held in March.

	A	B	C
June	<i>Su tsaru su</i> "The ten months month," i.e. ten months from the harvest	<i>Ayang keshung</i> 'sha "The month of jungle offer- ings"	<i>Akhuzu kessa 'sa</i> "The month for hoeing ter- races"
July	<i>Tele nga su</i> "The month of the <i>Tele</i> feast"	<i>Anung kesa 'sha</i> "The month of the <i>Anung kesa</i> ceremony," or <i>Yeye 'sha</i> — "The hungry month," be- cause last year's grain is run- ning short and the new har- vest is not in	<i>Rasa 'sa.</i> "The month of the <i>Rasa</i> cere- mony," or <i>Akhuzu keshuwa'sa</i> "The month for planting ter- races"
August	<i>Tero kechung su</i> "The month for worshipping spirits"	<i>Akhet song khetung</i> 'sha "The month for worshipping spirits"	<i>Morakhu 'sa.</i> "The month for watching the crops," or <i>Akhukhu khu- khuwa 'sa</i> "The month when the bull frogs call"
September	<i>Lo phu su</i> "The month of first reaping"	<i>Azi wi ketsa 'sha</i> "The month of (first) cutting and eating the crop," or <i>Maperhe 'sha</i> "The month when the rice turns yellow"	<i>Achota kevuwa 'sa</i> "The month of millet har- vest"
October	<i>Lo gu su</i> "The month of reaping," or <i>Zangler kupen su</i> "The month for using the sickle"	<i>Azi khuwa 'sha</i> "The month of reaping"	<i>Amatha kevuwa 'sa</i> "The month of rice harvest"
November	<i>Shu kapfu su</i> "The month for carrying home the rice"	<i>Asu kapfuwa 'sha</i> "The month for carrying home the rice"	<i>Amatha kapfuwa</i> 'sa "The month for carrying home the rice"
December	<i>Ngada su</i> "The month of the <i>Ngada</i> feast"	<i>Akhurwa 'sha</i> "The month of the <i>Akhurwa</i> feast"	<i>Ngazurwa 'sa</i> "The month of the <i>Ngazu</i> feast"
Intercalary month	<i>Tekhe su</i>	<i>Keteshe 'sha</i>	<i>Khute 'sa</i>

There are terms for the phases of the moon, but they are of little practical importance and are little used. They are as follows —

	A	B	C
Waxing moon	<i>Su mhung</i> "Moon's face"	<i>Asha mpi kepong</i> "Moon not full"	<i>Asa shuteve</i> "Moon is coming out"
Full moon	<i>Su lu</i> "Middle moon"	<i>Asha kepong</i> "Full moon"	<i>Asa luve</i> "Middle moon"
Waning Moon	<i>Su khungtha</i> "Moon going"	<i>Asha shanta</i> "Moon going"	<i>Asa sunalatu</i> "Moon going"
Dark of the Moon	<i>Su zung</i> "Moon dark"	<i>Asha keshumong</i> "Moon invisible"	<i>Asa ashumong</i> "Moon invisible"

There are many divisions of the day, which is regarded as beginning at first cockerow, between 2 and 3 A.M. Men who have had to remain chaste up to that hour owing to some "genna" may then visit their wives. It is the habit of all Nagas to wake up once before midnight, and it will be noticed that this has given a name to one of the divisions. The list is as follows —

	A.	B.	C.
First cockerow	<i>Tero khunga</i>	<i>Awui khukhu. teguwa</i>	<i>Awu khutsetu.</i>
Second cockerow	<i>Tero khunghuge</i>	<i>Awui kentero khuta</i>	<i>Awu keri keri kwetu</i>
Third cockerow	<i>Tero khung khutu</i>	<i>Awui keshentero khuta</i>	<i>Awu keche keri kwetu</i>
Dark before dawn	<i>Berberu</i>	<i>Atsamezang</i>	<i>Thoritsetu</i>
Dawn.	<i>Yhekhapu aru</i>	<i>Ani keshowo</i>	<i>Areni shutetu</i>
Breakfast time	<i>Chu keto kho</i> "Time to eat rice"	<i>Aneng ketsa tsu pyenta</i> "Time to eat rice"	<i>Ashi ketsale thu</i> "Time to eat rice"
Time to go to the fields	<i>Psu gweng kho</i>	<i>Kitushenchu atsu pyenta</i>	<i>Azu vu kewale chuwa thu</i>
Time when all have left for the fields	<i>Psu nyengshi</i>	<i>Yayang kwowata</i>	<i>Aveihe kewa thu</i>
Time to begin work	<i>Senwuri kho</i>	<i>Atenu kukutashung atsi pyenta</i>	<i>Agu khoro kewa thu</i>
Time for the midday meal	<i>Ho kho</i>	<i>Khameshu tsu</i>	<i>Ameshu ketsa</i>



	A	B	C
Time for the midday rice-beer	<i>Zu zo</i>	<i>Khafu sa</i>	<i>Azila khuketse</i>
Late afternoon	<i>Meihl kekweg</i> <i>gwang kho</i> "The time for herdsmen to re- turn "	<i>Amesu kekryanu</i> <i>khoha tsu</i> <i>pyenta</i> "The time for the herdsmen to re- turn "	(No term, as they keep no cattle )
Evening	<i>Khukhung nyu</i> <i>gwang kho</i> "Time for people to return who are hungry for their supper "	<i>Nkengz hakhuta</i> "Time when hungry people have left their work "	<i>Monule</i> (No derivation known )
Dusk	<i>Zangu seru</i> "The sky dar- kens "	<i>Atsaang kezong</i> <i>teghu</i> "The sky dar- kens "	<i>Atsozom thu</i> "The time when night comes "
Supper time	<i>Ohu keto kho</i> "Time to eat rice "	<i>Aneng ketsa tsu</i> <i>pyenta</i> "Time to eat rice "	<i>Ashu ketsale thu</i> "Time to eat rice "
Early night	<i>Zieru kho</i> "Time to lie down "	<i>Zovata</i> "Time to lie down "	<i>Zeluri</i> "Time to lie down "
About 10 p m	<i>Zitsing kho</i> "Sleeping time "	<i>Zovata</i> (As above )	<i>Zotala</i> "Sleeping time "
About 11 p m	<i>Zitsing gwa</i> "Sleep breaking "	<i>Zenshong shaa</i> "Sleep breaking "	<i>Zenu sera</i> "Sleep breaking "
Midnight	<i>Tsenu</i>	<i>Chonchela alapwa</i>	<i>Tsotela</i>

## APPENDIX V

### HEAD-HUNTING IN ANCIENT FORMOSA

IN the second volume of the *Atlas Chinensis*, by Arnoldus Montanus, "English'd" by John Ogilby in 1671, there is an account (pp 11 *sqq*) of head-hunting in Formosa. The parallel with Naga custom is so close, the language so quaint and the book so rare that it is worth quoting. Describing a raid the writer says —

"Off goes their Heads, Hands and Feet, some times, more cruelly they slice out their whole bodies, each one carrying a Collup in triumph home. Sometimes at Night they break into a house or two, which leaving, their business being done, two of the Parties stick fast in their likelest way to return, so to stop the Pursuer, sharp-pointed Reeds, about half a yard long, they making their Retreat, by another improbable way. Each Conqueror that shares for his own part a Head, carries it through his village upon a Spear, insulting and singing in praise and glory of his God, to whom he solely ascribes his Victory, thus proudly vamping they are joyfully received everywhere, and entertained with the best liquor the Town affords. Each sixteen houses have their own Chappel, to which they carry this their bloody Spoil which afterwards he boyls till the Flesh comes from the bone, then drying in the sun, they pour strong liquor (a custom which they never omit) upon the bare Scalp, fourteen days they keep Holy, Feasting and Sacrificing to their gods, who gave them so great and glorious a Victory. Of these Heads, whoe'er enjoys one, looks upon it as his greatest Treasure, putting them beyond Gold and Silver, or the most precious Jewel, and when any sudden accident of Fire or the like happen, this they take most care of, how to carry it with them, or leave it in safety."

The liquor they pour on the head is, of course, rice-beer, and what is probably the earliest account in English of the making of it runs as follows (p. 10) —

“ They take a quantity of Rice, which they put in a Vessel made for the purpose and boyle it, which turning out they knead into little Balls or Pellets, when they are well chew'd, they put them into another Pot, there letting it stand till grown sowre, to this they pour a good quantity of Spring water, which being so put together, works a moneth or two, for so long it will ferment, then it becomes a clear, pleasant Wholsom and strong Liquor, which the longer kept, the better grows, for it will hold good thirty years The top of this Drink is thin and clear, the bottom or sediment thick like our Pap, the thin makes their Drink, with which they often Fuddle, the thick makes their Cawdle to recover them, which Crop-sick they eat with Spoons This they carry with them to the Field, and take a dose thereof when they think fit, and thus yearly they spend much of their rice.”

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# INDEX

## PART II—RENGMA NAGA WORDS

[Owing to the very large number of Rengma words found in the book, it has been thought best to place the majority of them in the second part of the index. Only those which occur frequently, or those for which there is no English equivalent and all names of gennas and festivals, will be found in Part I, the remainder are placed in Part II.]

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